Contents – News coverage of rebate on HST on hydro – September 12-14, 2016

A note of hysteria

Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A8
Section: News
Byline: Christina Blizzard
Column: Queen's Park

That was one panicked throne speech Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell delivered Monday. Usually such events set out a vision - goals and aspirations the government will strive to achieve. This one had a note of hysteria about it: The Liberals are furiously backpedalling on **hydro** rates. The government finally got the message that it can't simply push the cost of the Liberals' failed **electricity** policies onto ratepayers. So they're going to move them onto taxpayers.

The people who use the least **electricity** will get the smallest **tax** breaks. They'll be subsidizing the fat cats who can afford to run their air conditioners and their pool pumps all day. Forget about the senior who waits until midnight to turn on the washing machine.

And the Liberals are still clinging to their promise to balance the books - next year.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. In the 13 years they've been in power, they've never balanced the books. This year, they got three rousing cheers for bringing in a deficit of $5.7 billion.

It was heralded as a breakthrough. This wastrel government has introduced some of the biggest **tax** heists this province has ever known - the health-care levy, the **HST** and now cap-and-trade - and still it can't balance its books.

The Liberals consistently break their election promises, yet voters docilely return them to office. They scrap gas plants, they waste billions on questionable boondoggles such as eHealth and Ornge, yet they get re-elected.

In the rest of the world, voters rise up when their governments are tainted by the mere whiffof scandal or mismanagement.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseffwas impeached for manipulating government accounts. It's alleged she was illegally moving funds between accounts, to make up deficits in social programs. Now she's gone. That seems to me small potatoes compared to some of the shenanigans the Liberals have got up to.

Rousseff's approval ratings plummeted from a high of 79% in March 2013 to 10% in March this year. Hmmm. Who does that remind me of?

Oh, Kathleen Wynne, who's been polling in the single digits recently and who was noticeably not front and centre during the recent Scarborough Rouge-River byelection, in which voters gave Liberals a stern spanking.

The way out of this is controversial. It's not a path that's taken often.

Nor should it be.

It's one that would take courage on the part of Dowdeswell. It's our version of recall legislation.

There's precedent for the vice-regal officer to step in and dismiss a government under extraordinary circumstances, according to constitutional lawyer Ronald Cheffins, a former justice of the courts of appeal for B.C. and Yukon, a former vicechair of the Law Reform Commission of British Columbia, and a professor emeritus of the University of Victoria.

Writing in the Canadian Parliamentary Review, Cheffins cites earlier precedents in B.C. and Manitoba when lieutenant governors have threatened premiers with their power of dismissal if they didn't shape up. "None of the above should be taken as an invitation to viceregal representatives to dismiss first ministers, but it does remain not only a clear legal power of a lieutenant governor or governor general, but also in extraordinary circumstances, in accordance with constitutional practice," Cheffins writes. In Australia in 1974, Gov.-Gen. Sir John Kerr dismissed scandal-plagued Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and replaced him with the leader of the Liberal opposition, Malcolm Fraser. Parliament was dissolved, an election called and Fraser won in a landslide.

We've suffered enough.

We can't afford any more of this chaotic government.

Send a message to Dowdeswell that she can't ignore: email lt.gov@ontario.ca or write her at Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ont., M7A 1A1.

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Length: 618 words

The Sudbury Star

Thibeault announces hydro relief; Northern, rural customers to benefit

Sudbury Star
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Ben Leeson

Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault says now that Ontario has built the best **electricity** system in North America, the next step is to make it affordable as possible.

Thibeault, **energy** minister for the Liberal government since June, plans to introduce legislation this week to **rebate** the provincial portion, or 8 per cent, of the Harmonized Sales **Tax** (**HST**) on **electricity** bills of residential, small business and farms as of Jan. 1, 2017, for an estimated average savings of $130 per year or $11 per month.

Rural residents will receive additional relief, Thibeault announced during a press conference at Greater Sudbury Utilities on Tuesday, amounting to an average yearly reduction of $540 per year or $45 per month.

Businesses will also benefit from reductions of up to 34 per cent, Thibeault said, through the expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative.

If all goes as planned, Thibeault plans to introduce the legislation on Thursday.

"If you go back to 2003, in August we had that blackout that cost our system and cost our province billions and billions of dollars, because we had a blackout for three days," Thibeault said at GSU. "We had a crumbling system that we actually had to rebuild. It's through our efforts working with our local utilities, with **Hydro** One, that we built a system that people can be proud of, so by 2015, we are 90 per cent GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions-free. We're also ensuring we have a safe, reliable system - every time you flick that switch, you have power, you don't have those rolling blackouts. We're very pleased to say we've got the best system in North America and we're now doing our best to make it affordable as possible."

Rising **hydro** rates, and **energy** costs in general, are certainly a concern for many Ontarians, as well as provincial opposition parties. Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown called out Thibeault over **electricity** costs just one month into his tenure as minister, even demanding he resign over mismanagement of the province's **hydro** utility.

There has also been outcry over the decision to sell off parts of **Hydro** One, which critics fear will only drive up rates.

Premier Kathleen Wynne took the unusual step earlier this week of proroguing the legislature so she could deliver a new throne speech, one that included the promise of relief for those struggling to pay utility costs. That's what the new legislation will deliver, according to Thibeault.

"Over the last decade, we've been paramount as a government to ensure we're building a clean, safe and reliable **electricity** system, one we can all be proud of," Thibeault said. "We haven't had smog days in this province for two years and I think that stuffis key, but for us, it's to take it to the next level, to ensure we make this as affordable as can be for as many families and businesses as possible, because we've heard, over the last few months when I have been minister and, of course, the party has heard over the last year or so that **electricity** costs have become difficult for some families. That's why we're acting now."

He dismissed opposition criticism that the government hasn't truly eliminated the **HST** from **hydro** bills, but rather reducing the amount by 8 per cent before **tax**, as "semantics."

"What we have done is we have acted quickly," Thibeault said. "Rather than going through the whole process of having to negotiate it with the CRA or with the feds, because the **HST** is the harmonized sales **tax**. We have immediately acted and said we're going to take this offas soon as possible, which is Jan. 1, 2017. Some of the opposition parties are saying they'd like to see that now, so I hope they actually work with us and get this passed through the legislature as quickly as possible."

The **HST** **rebate**, which will be factored directly into bills, is on top of the current residential and rural rate protection plan, embedded in bills since 2002.

The Ontario **Electricity** Support Program for low-income consumers also remains available. Ratepayers must apply for support through the OESP.

Responding to critics who say savings announced this week will quickly be negated through future increases, Thibeault said no government or utility can predict where prices will go, but pointed to recent findings by Ontario's financial accountability officer as evidence his government has worked hard to improve the electrical system.

"Ontario has some of the best and lowest **electricity** costs in the country," Thibeault said. "Only British Columbia has cheaper **electricity** costs than we do. When you take in all of our **energy** costs and you compare it to North America, we're right smack dab in the middle, and everyone else now has to catch up to where we are - we've eliminated coal, we have a clean, reliable, green system, so we're going to continue to ensure we have this great system, to continue to have the power we need to move forward with, but at the same time, we're trying to take it to the next level, to make it affordable for some who are still finding it difficult."

Thibeault's announcement did little to ease concerns of members of the Keep **Hydro** Public Coalition, a handful of whom gathered outside GSU in protest on Tuesday.

"I'm really not happy about what has also been sold," Nina Kitts said. "It's affecting everyone and people think we're safe here, because we're with Sudbury **Hydro**, but they don't necessarily understand they're getting most of their **hydro** from **Hydro** One, and there's another 30 per cent on the block. If we don't make a lot of noise, people will never know and they're just going to go ahead and sell it all off and rates are going to jump again."

With that in mind, Kitts found the **HST** **rebate** to be small comfort.

"Until they're telling us they've dropped all their plans (for a selloff), it's no good," Kitts said. "There shouldn't be any **tax** on it in the first place.

"It's just not enough. I live with my 87-year-old mother and our **hydro** bill has just gone up incredibly. My aunt, who is in her 70s in Wanup, has just had to switch over and pay out of her pocket to do a bunch of stuff, because she had thousands of dollars in heating bills, because she's **electric**. That was before. What's going to happen now? It's crazy."

The official opposition was likewise unimpressed. The Progressive Conservative Party sent out a statement Tuesday afternoon with several pointed questions for the **energy** minster.

"Carole Legault of Azilda spends $660 a month on **hydro**, and the bills keep increasing," the PC statement said. "She's forced to heat her home with wood, which is barely enough to keep her three kids warm at night. Instead of paying some of the highest rates on the continent, she covers her children in blankets for warmth. Your government has finally pledged to take the **hydro** crisis seriously. For that we applaud you. But the throne speech offered nothing more than **hydro** band-aids. **Hydro** rates will continue to skyrocket for Northern and rural families like the Legaults. Is an increase of $17 in rebates for low-density customers sufficient for Carole Legault when rates will increase again on November 1st? Will $17 a month keep her children warm at night?"

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Length: 1209 words

Oshawa This Week

Oshawa MPP Jennifer French says hydro changes are "Band-Aid solutions" to rising costs

Oshawa This Week
Wed Sep 14 2016
Section: News
Byline: Reka Szekely

OSHAWA -- Oshawa MPP Jennifer French is skeptical the elimination of the provincial portion of the **HST** on **hydro** bills is enough to help residents and businesses struggling with the cost of **electricity**.

The NDP MPP announced last week that she wants residents and businesses to send her copies of their **hydro** bills so she can raise the issue with the premier and **energy** minister and said she plans to keep collecting the bills despite changes announced in Monday's throne speech.

On Sept. 12, the Liberals announced that starting Jan. 1, 2017 the government will **rebate** the provincial portion of the **HST** on bills, representing an eight per cent **rebate** for residents and small businesses. The government also announced additional savings for rural residents, about $45 per month representing 20 per cent of their bills.

Oshawa MPP Jennifer French sheds the light on **hydro** bills in anticipation of Liberal throne speech l September 12, 2016

"Whether in Kenora, Sudbury, Belleville, London or Barrie, your government has listened to and has heard your concerns," the Liberals said in the throne speech. "It recognizes that the cost of **electricity** is now stretching family budgets."

But French wonders if any gains will be wiped out in short order by **hydro** rates that will continue to rise. She also pointed out the speech didn't mention the privatization of **Hydro** One which she worries will drive costs up.

"We didn't hear what we needed to hear today, what we heard was sort of a halfway acknowledgement that there's struggle in the province," she said.

Oshawa resident Jeff Goodall was one of the residents dropping off his bill at the NDP MPP's office on Friday. Sept. 9. He lives in a one-and-a-half storey house with no air conditioning, just a couple of fans to beat the summer heat. His most recent **hydro** bill was $109.64, more than double the $42.07 he paid in the same period last year.

"I got my **hydro** bill online, I think it was yesterday, and I was utterly shocked," he said.

French doesn't believe the changes announced by the government address the larger issue like the hidden global adjustment on residential bills.

"These are short-term Band-Aid solutions, but while they matter where are we going to find ourselves in a year ... is Jeff going to be down to one fan instead of two, at what rate are the rates going to increase?"

Oshawa Mayor John Henry points out the City has spent $1.5 million on global adjustment fees this year and shared a recent streetlight bill to show its large impact. The City's May streetlight bill for 12,890 lights showed the market cost of power was just shy of $3,000 for the month but the global adjustment on the bill was $91,000, bringing the total bill to almost $222,000. That included delivery charges and almost $25,000 in **HST**. In June 2015, the City paid $151,000 for streetlights of which $62,000 was global adjustment.

According to the Ontario **Energy** Board, the global adjustment "reflects the differences between the market price of **electricity** and the regulated or contract prices that are paid to generators for the **electricity** they produce".

The mayor points out that for residents, the global adjustment fee is hidden in their time-of-use rates and that residents are paying for high **electricity** costs with their property taxes as municipalities use **hydro** in community centres, seniors' homes, sewage and water pumping and more.

"The challenge we have is each month is not predictable ... we're doing everything we can to conserve **energy** but at the end of the day your bill goes up, and that's the same problem residents are having," said Mayor Henry. "It doesn't matter what you do, it just keeps going up and up."

He believes the issue of **hydro** bills, whether residential or for businesses like General Motors considering their options in Ontario, will remain a key issue.

"I believe the next election issue in the province of Ontario will be **electricity**."

Meanwhile French wants to keep seeing those bills.

"I am continuing to invite them," she said. "I love having the stories and understanding people's realities. It is making it really clear to me what the community priorities should be."

Constituents can drop off or mail their bills to French's constituency office. It's located at 78 Centre St. N., Unit 2, Oshawa L1G 4B6.

Length: 706 words
Permalink: www.durhamregion.com...»

The Intelligencer

Hydro rebate debate rages; Cutting **HST** simply not enough, says food bank operations director; Smith unimpressed

The Belleville Intelligencer
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Luke Hendry

At Gleaners Food Bank, operations director Susanne Quinlan's response to proposed **hydro** rebates come in a few concise words.

"Ridiculous," she said. "Just not enough."

Her comments came one day after the Ontario's embattled government announced a plan to remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** (**HST**), or eight per cent, from all **electricity** bills. The governing Liberals also promised a further **rebate** of 12 per cent for rural residents. Rural dwellers tend to face higher delivery fees than those in urban areas.

Gleaners is the hub for food banks in the Quinte region. Quinlan said the cost of living, including **hydro** rates, is the main reason why people need such charities.

But the proposed rebates fall well short of what Ontarians need and are proof the government doesn't understand common people's situations, she said.

"I don't know what reality they're living in, but it's not the people of Ontario's reality," Quinlan said.

"Just taking off the **HST**? That's ridiculous. They don't really have an idea of how, day to day, people struggle in the winter months.

"If we get another cold winter, it's going to force people to food banks, because you've gotta keep the heat on," she said, saying the government should take a different approach.

"If they want to do something, they've got to set up a program" which gears electrical bills to residents' incomes, she said.

She also suggested "installing solar panels on everyone's roof" or programs helping residents to make their homes more energyefficient.

The region's members of provincial parliament responded mostly along party lines.

"They haven't tackled the biggest issue, which is dealing with the rising cost of **electricity**," said Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith, the Official Opposition's associate **energy** critic.

He said he was skeptical the rebates would be as effective as promised.

"When you're seeing **hydro** bills coming in from North Hastings and Centre Hastings that are $600, 20 per cent is going to make a nice difference - if you qualify for it.

"I suspect a lot of people won't qualify for it."

He also said Premier Kathleen Wynne in 2011 opposed the HSTrelated **rebate**.

Smith said Ontario's Green **Energy** Act is flawed and leading to wasted spending on alternative **energy**.

"We have to stop putting wind and solar in the ground in the way that the contracts are designed," Smith said. "We're turning down the more efficient and reliable forms of **electricity**" He said his Progressive Conservative party would "stop these incredibly expensive" green projects.

"We would halt the Green **Energy** Act," he said. "We wouldn't be selling offany more shares of **Hydro** One."

Smith said the party, under different leadership, had once favoured privatizing **Hydro** One but the current party has "backed away" from that position.

"It's not something we're discussing now.

"I would say 'stay tuned' as far as our **energy** policy goes," Smith said. "We're underway right now with our policy advisory committees."

He said one local project has promise.

"We should be moving more toward projects like the pumpedstorage power project in Marmora," said Smith.

The proposal by Northland Power would generate **electricity** in a former mine site.

"It's a project that will supply the power when we need it, during the peak power periods in the early morning and afternoon," Smith said.

Smith said **hydro** costs remain by far the largest issue voiced by residents to his staff throughout his five years in office. The second largest issue is home care, especially reductions in care, he said. The MPP said the proposed rebates are wise, but "too little too late.

"Any help at this point in time is welcome," he said. "These programs should have been in place year ago because so many people have lost their homes and had their power cut offand couldn't pay their bills."

Northumberland-Quinte West Liberal MPP Lou Rinaldi, meanwhile, defended the plan but acknowledged he, too, has long been aware of the high cost of **electricity**.

"I felt the pain. I'm not going to defend it," Rinaldi said.

He said Monday's announcements show the government has heard residents "loud and clear.

"Is it a fix for everybody?

Probably not."

But he said the government has made other improvements in the **energy** sector, including repairs and improvements to electrical networks.

"We did a humungous amount of infrastructure upgrades," he said, claiming power outages are now "virtually gone.

"We're still committed to balance the budget," Rinaldi added, noting the creation of 100,000 new childcare spaces was also announced Monday.

Critics, including Smith, have said the government is offering **hydro** rebates only because of its plummeting popularity.

Rinaldi said he reads polls but doesn't focus on them. He said opposition parties are heavy on criticism yet short on solutions.

"I would encourage them to tell us, in the spirit of trying to do the best thing, what their plans would be."

He also said improvements in technology continue to have potential.

"Costs to generate **electricity** by solar panels in the last 10 years has dropped by 75 per cent," he said.

Smith, Belleville councillor Paul Carr and **Hydro** One ombud Fiona Crean will lead a public meeting about **hydro** rates Sept. 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Gerry Masterson Community Centre. Smith said Crean will provide information about rates and take questions from the audience.

The community centre is at 516 Harmony Rd., Corbyville, just west of Highway 37.

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Length: 890 words

NORTH BAY
NUGGET

1,500 people sign **hydro** cost petition

North Bay Nugget
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A2
Section: News

Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli read a petition in the Ontario Legislature Thursday calling on the Kathleen Wynne government to take meaningful action regarding the skyrocketing cost of **electricity** in Ontario. "I recently launched a petition calling upon the Liberal government to come to its senses and stop their failed **energy** policies that have driven **electricity** costs to unaffordable levels, and the response has been extraordinary," said Fedeli.

"In fact, we've had over 1,500 to date with many more signatures still coming in," Fedeli added.

Since the Liberal government first took office, average households in Ontario are paying $1,000 more a year on their annual **hydro** bills. It was recently confirmed that Ontario ratepayers now officially pay the highest residential **electricity** rates in North America.

In the response to mounting pressure, the recent throne speech indicated the government would remove an amount equivalent to the provincial portion of the **HST** on **hydro** bills.

"The government has squandered an opportunity to provide families and seniors with meaningful relief from skyrocketing **hydro** rates. Instead they introduced a new $1-billion Band-Aid that does nothing to actually reduce **hydro** costs," said Fedeli.

"Thousands of signatories to the petition have made it clear -enough is enough. I will continue to read the petition in the legislature until the Wynne government comes to its senses and ends its failed **energy** policies," Fedeli concluded.

Length: 224 words

Wynne lowballing cap-and-trade cost
Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment

Since Premier Kathleen Wynne says she is resetting her government with a new session of the Legislature, now would be a good time for her to come clean on the cost of carbon pricing to Ontarians.

So far, the only increase in the cost of living the Wynne government has acknowledged under its cap-and-trade scheme is a hike of $156 annually per household, starting Jan. 1, due to higher gasoline and natural gas prices.

That alone will more than wipe out the **electricity** savings of $130 annually for most Ontario households, also starting Jan. 1, that Wynne announced Monday by removing the 8% Ontario sales **tax** from **electricity** bills.

Of course, Ontario's **electricity** prices are scheduled to rise Nov. 1, two months before Wynne's **tax** relief kicks in, costing Ontarians more money.

But the bigger problem is Wynne's estimate of $156 per household annually as the public cost of capand-trade for gasoline and home heating fuel starting Jan. 1. Cap-and-trade doesn't just raise the price of gasoline and natural gas.

It raises the price of all goods and services that consume fossil fuel **energy**, meaning most of them, as businesses impacted by carbon pricing pass along their increased costs to the public through higher retail prices on goods and services.

The Wynne government estimated - at least before the crash of the California and Quebec cap-and-trade market it's about to join - that cap-and-trade would increase Ontario government revenues by $1.9 billion annually, starting Jan. 1. Since the public will pay this extra $1.9 billion in higher retail prices, that means the average Ontario household (there were 4.9 million of them according to the last census) is facing increased costs of $387 annually, 148% more than the Wynne government claims.

By contrast, the Alberta government has acknowledged the total cost to Alberta households of the carbon **tax** it will introduce next year, which is another form of carbon pricing, involves more than increased costs for gasoline and home heating fuel.

Alberta estimates the total cost increase per household at $408 to $443 annually.

Wynne must tell Ontarians what the real costs of cap-and-trade will be for them.

Length: 341 words

THE RECORD

No real relief for hydro bill pain

Waterloo Region Record
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A6
Section: EDITORIAL

Reset. **Rebate**. Re-diculous.

Premier Kathleen Wynne had pledged relief for Ontarians bruised and battered from **electricity** bills that have more than doubled over the past 10 years of provincial Liberal rule.

The crisis - and it is a crisis for many working Ontarians - is especially severe in rural areas where some local charities have actually set up relief funds to help struggling families paying monthly **hydro** bills of $400 to $500.

But in the face of mounting public pain and anger, the best Wynne's government could do in Monday's highly hyped throne speech was offer the Band-Aid of a measly eight-per-cent cut in the harmonized sales **tax** placed on top of those exorbitant **hydro** bills.

If Wynne expects thanks for this so-called reset when the next provincial election rolls around in 2018, she is sadly mistaken. The public is smart enough to look beyond the shiny, **tax**-cut glass bauble she is dangling in front of their eyes and see an ugly provincial landscape strewn with the wreckage of 13 years of Liberal bungling and scandal.

It's true that this eight-per-cent **rebate**, refund or subsidy - call it what you will - is expected to save the typical family $120 a year on its **electricity** bill, and these days many families would find even such a modest sum of money useful.

Yet, in fact, this benefit will make no difference for ordinary families because it will be negated by new taxes the same Liberal government will impose starting in January on gasoline and natural gas, new taxes that are expected to cost the typical family $156 a year.

What the premier puts in one of your pockets, she's ready to pick out of the other, and then some.

The policy looks even more dubious when you realize it will cost the Ontario treasury $1 billion a year. Unless the government finds $1 billion in savings, which seems doubtful, it will have to squeeze $1 billion more from taxpayers than it is squeezing today or it will have to run a deficit - something it has sworn not to do.

Nor does the sales-**tax** cut on **hydro** bills address the real problem - the soaring and crippling costs of these bills themselves, which are among the highest, if not the highest, in North America.

Having driven up the costs of **electricity**, in large part by overly generous subsidies for wind and solar power, the government is completely at a loss as to how to make **electricity** more economical, not just for homeowners but businesses.

But here's the final salt in the paper cuts from these **hydro** bills: The incredible, amazing and fabulous eight-per-cent **rebate** in the **HST** on **electricity** bills appears to be little more than a regurgitated version of the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit, a 10-per cent **rebate** for **hydro** ratepayers the Liberals introduced in 2011 and scrapped at the start of this year. That benefit cost the government about $1 billion a year and saved typical families about $130 a month. Sound familiar?

The Liberals have perfected the art of political recycling. It may not save them from the political landfill after the next election.

Length: 513 words

Slap in the face

Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment
Byline: Ron Whitehorne

Re "Wynne's $1B **hydro** giveaway" (Shawn Jeffords, Sept 13): This cancelling of **HST** on our **hydro** is a slap in the face to consumers. The Ontario auditor general stated that between 2006 to 2014, **hydro** consumers overpaid $37 billion for their power. The root cause for all this financial injustice is the Green **Energy** Act that former premier McGuinty instigated. Most have discovered that wind and solar **energy** does not work and never will, and instead of stopping this insanity, this Liberal government has signed more of these unsightly projects to scar our beautiful countryside and bankrupt our province in doing so. This unworkable situation must stop immediately if we are ever to get reasonable **electricity** rates.

RON WHITEHORNE

(The Liberal government's experiment with wind and solar power has been an unmitigated disaster, costing Ontarians tens of billions of dollars for expensive and unreliable **electricity** generation that was never needed to replace coal plants)

Story Type: Letter
Length: 150 words

Rob Peter, Pay Paul

Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment
Byline: David Montgomery

If I understand this correctly, the government plans to give us a **hydro** **rebate** using our **tax** revenue that it has already spent, while at the same time funding 100,000 child-care spaces with more money it doesn't have? And it's concerned our children can't do math?

DAVID MONTGOMERY

(Wynne can dress up these announcements all she wants. At the end of the day, taxpayers are footing the bill for all of these so-called goodies)

Story Type: Letter
Length: 73 words

THE RECORDER & TIMES

Hydro help of 8% too little: MPP; Steve Clark rejects throne speech; Grit prez defends 'bold decisions' by Wynne government

The Brockville Recorder & Times
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Ronald Zajac
Source: Postmedia Network.

Monday's throne speech didn't offer enough to Ontarians struggling with skyrocketing **electricity** bills, said Leeds-Grenville MPP Steve Clark.

In a scathing response to a move he considers cynical, Clark, a deputy leader of the Opposition Progressive Conservative Party, said Premier Kathleen Wynne is only now offering relief from high **Hydro** One bills because of her party's recent byelection loss in Scarborough-Rouge River.

"It's starting to affect the fortunes of the Ontario Liberal Party at the ballot box," said Clark, noting the Tories have now won three consecutive byelections.

The head of the local Liberal riding association defended his government, saying the throne speech offered responsible policy while attempting to tackle long-term problems.

Wynne prorogued the legislature last week, an attempt to reset the government by outlining a new set of priorities less than two years from the next provincial election.

The move came just days after her Liberal party lost the once safe Liberal seat in the Toronto byelection.

Monday's throne speech included a promise to remove the provincial portion of the **HST**, or eight per cent, from all **electricity** bills, both residential and commercial. The government estimates that will save the average consumer about $130 a year.

Rural consumers will be offered additional relief, which could save as much as $45 a month when combined with the **HST** savings. And industrial consumers will be offered even more programs to keep their **hydro** costs down.

Other promises include creating 100,000 child care spaces over five years, starting in 2017; adding up to 350,000 home care nursing hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support; and efforts to improve math skills, in particular numeracy.

Clark took aim at the **Hydro** measures, noting the government's plan to remove the provincial portion of the **HST** from **hydro** bills comes into effect January 1, 2017, the same day Ontarians start paying the Liberals' carbon **tax**.

The MPP called the **HST** relief "a Band-Aid solution" and "too little, too late."

"The rates are going to continue to skyrocket," said Clark, who also called the measures aimed at rural residents "a slap in the face."

"People are choosing between heating and eating and the government has to make some changes to the way they do business if the people are to have the relief that they want."

Those changes, added Clark, include committing not to sign more contracts that sell **energy** at a loss to neighbouring jurisdictions and halting "the fire sale of **Hydro** One shares."

The Tory MPP wondered how the Wynne government will pay for the new child care spaces, given that the time frame extends beyond its current mandate. He added the government made it harder to get child care in the first place.

Greg Best, president of the Leeds-Grenville provincial Liberal riding association, rejected the "Band-Aid solution" criticism.

The Wynne government has made "bold decisions" on longterm issues, in particular climate change, said Best, who pointed to local examples such as a prolonged drought, as well as storms and tornado warnings, as evidence of that problem's local impact.

"When governments make bold, long-term decisions, there's an element of risk in doing that," added Best.

Sometimes, governments make mistakes, he said.

The throne speech is an example of the government readjusting to mitigate the impacts of these longterm decisions, he said.

He particularly welcomed the extra relief to rural **Hydro** users, who are "paying **Hydro** prices that are unrealistic."

"I think that's a responsible reaction to what's happening," said Best.

"The government has to look at the impact that those policies have on taxpayers."

Best wants to see the impact of the rebates on the average individual before pronouncing judgment on them.

If the response is insufficient, "it should be revisited again," added Best.

@RipNTearRon on Twitter

Length: 616 words

Empty words

Ottawa Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment
Byline: Mike Alain
Dateline: OTTAWA

Kathleen Wynne is listening! To whom or what?

The throne speech was mostly a rehash of old ideas and spending that Ontario cannot afford. Removing the provincial **tax** on **hydro** is a farcical and totally inadequate response to an issue the premier considers urgent. It does nothing to reduce the **hydro** rates and ludicrous "delivery" charges that are really pushing budgets to desperation levels. Once more, too little, too late.

The only bright spot is the name "throne speech." It is appropriate given the content is akin to what most people deliver when on "the throne."

MIKE ALAIN

OTTAWA

(It'll save us some change. But it does nothing to fix the real problem - high **hydro** prices.)

Story Type: Letter
Length: 117 words

Throne speech not what Ontario needs
Ottawa Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A19
Section: Comment
Byline: Ben Eisen

On Monday, Kathleen Wynne's government delivered its speech from the throne.

The address was widely anticipated, with many observers describing it as an opportunity for the government to "reset" its policy agenda.

Ontarians therefore might have hoped the speech would outline significant changes in the government's policy approach and new strategies for addressing the major economic and fiscal challenges facing the province.

Instead, they got a superficial address that confirmed the government's commitment to the same failed approach that has helped reduce Ontario to have-not status in confederation and caused its public debt to balloon.

Let's start with the signature policy commitment of the speech, which was a promise to remove the 8% provincial portion of the 13% **HST** from skyrocketing **hydro** bills. Ratepayers will welcome this relief, but it would have been more encouraging to see the government recognize its own role in contributing to the big run-up in **electricity** costs and signal a more fundamental change in course. One key reason for high **electricity** prices in Ontario is the 2009 Green **Energy** Act (GEA) and the creation of high-cost feed-in-tariffs, which ensure the government purchases renewable power (wind and solar) at guaranteed rates above the market price.

The predictable result is that Ontarians pay more for **electricity** than they otherwise would.

A "reset" of Ontario's approach to **electricity** policy would have been welcome if it involved a promise of a new policy approach focused on affordability and reliability.

The speech, however, signaled no such change in direction.

Instead, it simply put a Band-Aid on a costly economic wound that was largely self-inflicted.

Indeed, the government shows no sign of abandoning its commitment to costly and ineffective "green" programs and remains committed to marching forward with

its poorly designed cap-andtrade scheme.

These facts make it hard to take the government's profession of a newfound commitment to fighting high **electricity** prices seriously.

Energy is not the only file in desperate need of a reset that did not did get one.

The government's approach to public finances also needs an overhaul.

The province is set to run its ninth consecutive, multibillion dollar deficit this year and, as a result, the province's net debt load has approximately doubled since 2007.

The legislature's own Financial Accountability Office has pointed out the government has provided no detailed plan for how the government will achieve its stated goal of returning debt levels to prerecession levels (in comparison to the size of the economy).

In fact, the government's current fiscal plan calls for billions of dollars in new debt in the years ahead.

Wynne's anticipated "reset" seemed to afford a perfect opportunity to finally deliver a long overdue plan to reform and reduce provincial spending.

Instead, the Liberal government of Ontario announced substantial new spending on social programs.

Clearly, it remains committed to the **tax**-and-spend approach to public finances that have created the fiscal mess it is in.

The sad reality is Ontario's economy has underperformed relative to its potential for more than a decade, thanks largely to misguided policies from Queen's Park.

The need for a genuine policy reset was clear. Unfortunately, what we got instead was an implicit promise of more of the same.

Eisen is an analyst at the Fraser Institute.

Length: 534 words

NORTH BAY
NUGGET

Hydro rebate misses the mark

North Bay Nugget
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A2
Section: News
Column: Local Briefs

The **HST rebate** announced in Monday's throne speech fails to address the cause of escalating **hydro** rates, according to Patrick Madahbee.

"An eight per cent refund will certainly provide some relief but still does not obligate **hydro** providers to regulate their rates and fees in consideration of their consumers,

nor does it encourage transparency," says Madahbee, Anishinabek Nation grand council chief.

"Many of our remote First Nations are overburdened by excessive delivery fees, which have not been addressed."

Madahbee said the throne speech offered little in the way of new commitments for First Nations in Ontario.

"It is crucial that the provincial government aid First Nations in pushing the federal government to come good on promises already made but not moved on, such as ending boil water advisories, critical infrastructure development and upkeep, and education. "I hope that in the coming months, however, we can get more traction on our issues.

"Participation in the Ring of Fire only scratches the surface of First Nation potential within Ontario. As a demographic that is largely absent from industry, we are the answer to a thriving economy. The potential impact of First Nations on the overall Ontario economy has yet to be fully realized."

Length: 201 words

northumberland today.com

Rural areas will benefit from hydro bill reduction

Northumberland Today.com
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Valerie MacDonald

Almost a 20 % **hydro** bill reduction for rural residents and businesses, more child care spaces and a further commitment to balance the Ontario provincial budget by 2017-2018 were the top items contained in Monday's Liberal government Throne Speech, says Northumberland-Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi.

But Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown was not happy with what he characterized as confused directions in the speech and called the **hydro** cuts "too little, too late."

Rinaldi countered in an interview Monday night that it is easy to criticize, but he hasn't heard the opposition offer any concrete solutions to rising **hydro** costs, such as the ones the Throne Speech contains.

"What would they do ? They've just been criticizing ," Rinaldi said.

Specifically, areas like Hamilton Township and the rural areas of Port Hope, and other rural areas across Northumberland, will benefit from a 12 % **hydro** bill reduction come Jan. 1, 2017, in addition to cutting the 8 % (Ontario's portion of the) **HST** at that time, Rinaldi explained. That 12 % reduction (and the **HST** cut) will also be applicable to small businesses and agriculture operations as well as residents, he stressed.

Legislation is to be introduced to put the cuts directly on **hydro** bills, according to the contents of the Throne Speech.

Industry, too, will receive assistance with **hydro** costs by expanding a "special discount program " of about 30 % to smaller companies previously only offered to higher industrial /commercial **hydro** users, the local MPP said.

Another key aspect of the Throne Speech was a commitment to add 100,000 child care spaces over the next five years. That will affect newborns to age four, Rinaldi said.

Rinaldi stressed the continued commitment to balance the provincial government's operating budget in 2017-2018, but this is separate from the much larger cumulative deficit Ontario owes.

The government is also committed to continuing to support job growth and more local riding announcements can be expected by Christmas time or during the early winter months, Rinaldi added.

In criticizing the Throne Speech and the **hydro** cuts proposed, in particular, Brown said that families have been in "crisis " trying to pay **hydro** bills while keeping food on the table and having a place to live - but the government refused to acknowledge there was a crisis until they lost three Liberally-held ridings in byelections.

The next provincial election will be in 2018. vmacdonald @postmedia. com Twitter. com /NT _ vmacdonald

Length: 388 words

Grit **hydro** rebate falls far short , say critics

- **London Free Press**
- **Wed Sep 14 2016**

- **Page:** A3
- **Section:** News
- **Byline:** John Miner

If it ’ s a Band-aid, it appears to be falling short of covering the wound. the announcement by the **Ontario** Liberal government that it ’ s taking steps to reduce **electricity** costs for millions of families and businesses was panned tuesday by several sectors.

” It does nothing for us ,” said Francois abdelnour of the association of Major Power Consumers in **Ontario**.

In its plan announced in Monday ’ s throne speech, the Wynne government said businesses will be able to cut their **electricity** bills by as much as 34 per cent during peak demand periods.

” It just makes it more complicated ,” said abdelnour.

Ontario industrial plants still face **hydro** bills double what competitors in Quebec pay, he said.

” How can we compete with that ?” abdelnour asked.

Soaring **electricity** bills and the resulting wave of resentment across the **province** were fingered for the Liberals losing to the Progressive Conservatives in this month ’ s Scarborough-Rouge River byelection.

Premier Kathleen Wynne promised to respond. the measures announced Monday included cutting **Ontario** residential **electricity** bills by eight per cent for an average annual savings of $130.

Eligible rural **ratepayers**, who have been hit with substantially higher bills under **Ontario** ’ s **electricity** delivery charge formula, were promised additional relief of $540 a year on average.

During question period in the Legislature tuesday, Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown called it a Band-aid solution that comes too little, too late. though the eight per cent rebate on **hydro** bills kicks in Jan. 1,2017, **Ontario** residents face a **hydro** **rate** hike Nov. 1.

” How does that equal relief from **hydro** bills for **Ontario** ?” Brown asked.

While welcoming any cut as helpful, London restaurateur Mike Smith believes more has to be done about **electricity** costs for both businesses and residents.

In his own restaurant business that includes Joe Kool ’ s, **electricity** is now one of his top three costs.

” It ’ s tough for our business but it affects all businesses. You look at auto manufacturing and others, they have to deal with huge utility bills that make them less competitive with other jurisdictions .” When consumers are squeezed by rising **electricity** bills, they have less money to spend in restaurants and businesses, Smith said.

” Obviously dropping the HST is a good thing, but the **rates** have risen dramatically every year to a ridiculous point .” the **province** ’ s auditor general, Bonnie Lysyk, last year reporting Ontarians paid $37 billion more than market price for **electricity** over most of the previous decade and will pay an estimated $133 billion extra over the next 16 years because the government made decisions about power that ignored its own experts ’ advice.

” Basically what the government has done is move debt around - there is no real program change that would halt the rise of **electricity** bills ,” said Jane Wilson, president of Wind Concerns **Ontario**, a coalition of groups fighting wind farm development.

Stopping the rise of **electricity** charges would require cancelling contracts and halting the newprocurement program, Wilson said.

” An eight per cent rebate is meaningless when **rates** continue to rise .” .”

jminer @postmedia. com

- **Length:** 508 words

TORONTO STAR

Critics call **rebate** a 'Band-Aid'; Wynne's opponents skeptical that **hydro** **tax** break will lower Ontario **energy** costs

Toronto Star
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A8
Section: News
Byline: Rob Ferguson Toronto Star

The Liberal government's promised **tax** **rebate** on **hydro** bills came under scrutiny Tuesday as critics said it does nothing to fix the causes of rising **electricity** prices and questioned how long it will remain in place.

Calling the 8-per-cent break a "billion-dollar Band-Aid" for its annual cost to taxpayers, the Progressive Conservatives said the government's own long-term **energy** plan warns of higher prices as more investments are made to modernize the system.

"Let's be clear - **hydro** rates are not going down," PC Leader Patrick Brown said as MPPs held their first question period in the legislature to kick off the new session.

The first piece of legislation the Liberals reintroduced was the campaign finance reform bill, but it does not include new proposals - to be added later - that would prevent all MPPs and candidates from attending fundraising events.

"We're changing the way politics is done," said Government House leader Yasir Naqvi.

On the **electricity** file, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said rebates "come and go at a whim" under the Liberals, given that the government just nine months ago scrapped the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit that gave ratepayers 10 per cent off their **hydro** bills.

Premier Kathleen Wynne pledged in Monday's throne speech to **rebate** the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the **HST** from **hydro** bills starting in January, acknowledging that costs are hurting consumers.

"There was more that needed to be done," she told reporters Tuesday as debate began on the speech outlining her priorities for the second half of her term. "We've been listening to people."

Wynne noted there is already a program in place to help low-income Ontarians with **hydro** bills, which no longer carry a debt retirement charge for costs left over when the old Ontario **Hydro** was broken up.

Both opposition parties said Ontario makes more **electricity** than it needs, yet continues to sign new contracts for renewable power.

With Liberal fortunes lagging and the next provincial election due in 20 months, Wynne denied a political motive in the break on **hydro** bills for homes, small businesses and farms once legislation is passed this fall.

But if the government is serious about keeping the provincial **tax** off **hydro** bills, it should negotiate with the federal government to have **electricity** exempted from the **HST** permanently, Horwath said.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa said the Liberals opted for the **rebate** because it can be implemented sooner and said "we haven't established a date to end" the **tax** break.

The $1-billion annual cost of the **hydro** relief will be covered by revenues from increased growth in the economy, Sousa insisted.

However, Conservative MPP Vic Fedeli pointed out that Ontario's financial accountability officer stated in a recent report that the province - which the Liberals say will return to a balanced budget next year - appears headed back into deficit after the 2018 election.

While the **hydro** **tax** **rebate** will appear as a line item on monthly utility bills for consumers to see, the Conservatives also raised concerns that new carbon taxes of about $5 monthly on natural gas won't be listed on those bills.

"Frankly, that's not acceptable," said MPP Lisa Thompson.

The carbon fee, which the independent Ontario **Energy** Board ruled does not have to be mentioned on bills, is part of the government's $8.3-billion plan to fight climate change, which incentives for Ontarians to make their homes more **energy** efficient.

Length: 560 words

Don't be fooled

Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment
Byline: William Costigan

Eliminating the PST portion off our **hydro** bill does what exactly? As of Nov. 1, rates automatically increase. As of Jan. 1, Wynne will introduce a carbon **tax**; as of Sept. 1, your licence plate renewal sticker increased to $120. These Liberals are a slick bunch indeed.

Just look at the smug looks on their faces. Don't fall for it, folks. It's not an 8% reduction at all. The Liberals are blowing smoke and not adding the 8% **tax** will do nothing as rising fees elsewhere will recoup the socalled savings. If this is their idea of a reset, I suggest they reset again and again until they get it right.

WILLIAM COSTIGAN

(Ornge, e-Health, Green **Energy** Act, cancelled gas plants, cancelled Ontario pension scheme, record deficits and debt, when do the Ontario Liberals get anything right?)

Story Type: Letter
Length: 131 words

Grits end game?; Sousa won't say how long 8% **HST** **rebate** on **hydro** will last

Toronto Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A8
Byline: Shawn Jeffords

Finance Minister Charles Sousa won't say how long the new 8% **HST** **rebate** will stay on **hydro** bills.

Sousa ducked repeated questions from reporters Tuesday about the **rebate** announced in the Liberal's throne speech Monday. The **rebate**, which will kick in Jan. 1, was designed to help ease anger over soaring **hydro** rates.

"We haven't established a date to end," he said.

"We are doing something that other provinces and other jurisdictions around North America are going to be playing catch up. We've gotten out of dirty coal," he added.

The **rebate**, which will save the average consumer $130 a year, will cost the province around $1 billion annually. Sousa said the Liberals can afford the **rebate** and still balance the budget as promised in 2018 because of Ontario's stronger-than-expected economy.

"In the last budget, I provided for larger levels of reserves and contingencies to accommodate the ability to start giving back as the economy improved," he said. "We had to assess the economic rebound and as

it's proceeding, as we are coming to balance, we're able to provide some more accommodations for this **rebate** and for the people of Ontario."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said she was pleased to see the initial relief of the **HST** **rebate**, but called it an "impermanent" solution.

"These rebates, they come and go," she said. "They had a **rebate** in place, they just took it off the bills recently and now all of a sudden when they're in a little bit of a political downfall, or a place where people are unhappy, the **rebate** is back on the table."

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said that the **hydro** **rebate** will have little impact on **hydro** rates, which are set to jump again on Nov. 1. "How does that equal relief from **hydro** bills for Ontario?" Brown said in a statement. "If the Wynne Liberal s were serious about tackling the province's **energy** crisis, they wouldn't have given away $3 billion worth of **energy** in three years. The government wouldn't have signed 12 renewable contracts for **energy** we didn't need. And they wouldn't have started the **Hydro** One fire sale."

sjeffords@postmedia.com Length: 351 words

Nice try - not

Ottawa Sun
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A18
Section: Comment
Byline: Larry Comeau
Dateline: OTTAWA

Surely no Ontarian is going to be overjoyed at this lame attempt by the Kathleen Wynne Liberals to somehow regain credibility over the totally mismanaged **hydro** file.

With homeowners having their **hydro** bills more than quadruple over the decade, as the Liberals have stubbornly pushed its ideologically driven green dream, this eight-per-cent reduction is laughable.

Seeing we are going to start paying a carbon **tax** come January on just about everything, Ontarians are not going to get any relief on managing their households from this Liberal government.

LARRY COMEAU

OTTAWA (Nope, they aren't. Sad reality is this isn't going to get any better.)

Story Type: Letter
Length: 103 words

THE EXPOSITOR

Hydro prices

Brantford Expositor
Wed Sep 14 2016
Page: A4
Section: Opinion
Byline: Gerry Van Dongen
Dateline: Brantford

Eureka. Premier Wynne has finally discovered that the **electricity** rates are too high for the average income Ontarian.

The irony of this whole situation is that the taxpayers own the majority of power utilities but have no say as to who runs the business.

Hence, we have government-appointed upper management that gets paid excessive salaries and benefits.

And the managers must deal with a powerful union that has the upper hand in negotiations because a strike would paralyze the whole province.

It is ludicrous that **tax** dollars are being spent to promote conservation, which in turn leads to lower consumption of **electricity** and subsequently lower revenue and to once again higher prices Wouldn't it be much more beneficial if conservation leads to lower billing? Should not solar and wind turbine power cost less than **electricity** from conventional power stations or atomic reactors?

Until Premier Wynne starts addressing these questions any so-called cost adjustment is essentially a Band-Aid solution that does nothing for those who need relieve from the high cost of **electricity** created by past and present incompetent provincial governments.

Gerry Van Dongen

Brantford

Story Type: Letter
Length: 184 words

Nicholls: 8% Rebate "Not Enough"

- **blackburnnews.com**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**
- **Byline:** Jake Kislinsky
- Permalink

While he concedes Ontario's new hydro bill rebate will provide some relief for homeowners, Chatham-Kent-Essex MPP Rick Nicholls says an 8% tax refund isn't a good long-term fix.

"That's not enough. Keep in mind just one year ago we had the Clean Energy Benefit, which was a 10% reduction on all electricity bills. [The Liberals] voted to take it away," says Nicholls.

The hydro rebate was announced as part of Monday's Provincial Throne Speech. The 8% rebate accounts for the provincial portion of the HST on hydro bills.

But Nicholls calls the rebate a "band-aid." As a solution to getting hydro rates down, he suggests scrapping the Green Energy Act, and for Ontario to stop contracting solar and wind companies for excess energy.

He says this extra energy often ends up in the hands of other provinces, or US states like Michigan and New York.

"We say 'hey look, we'll either sell you our energy cheap, or we'll pay you to take our energy,'" says Nicholls. "Now that's not looking after Ontarian's wallets at all."

Thibeault defends hydro prices

- **sudbury.com**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**
- Permalink

When the Liberals came to power in 2003 under Dalton McGuinty, they inherited a "crumbling" electricity system that resulted in the massive, three-day blackout in August of that year.

Ontario, Energy Minister, and Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault said at a press conference today, then spent the next decade or so rebuilding the transmission and distribution system.

The results of that expense, he said, is an electricity system that no longer suffers brownouts or rolling blackouts and puts out 90-per-cent fewer greenhouse gas emissions, talking up the fact Ontario hasn't had a smog day in two years).

He also said during today's press conference at the Regent Street offices of Greater Sudbury Utilities that those upgrades didn't come without a cost.

"We know the changes put pressure on users," Thibeault told reporters this morning. He added later that Ontario now has "the best (electricity) system in North America. Now, we're making it more affordable."

When it comes to cost, Thibeault said only British Columbia has cheaper hydro costs in Canada and North America-wide, Ontario's prices put it somewhere in the middle of all jurisdictions.

By pressure, he meant higher costs — the province spent $35 billion to create new and refurbished cleaner power generation. Ontario has already eliminated the Debt Retirement Charge and introduced the Ontario Electricity Support Program that provides a credit to low-income households (as long as they apply for the rebate and meet the province's eligibility requirements).

As reported yesterday and repeated at today's press conference, Ontario is introducing new rebates to lower the cost of power. The province has cut the eight-per-cent provincial tax applied to hydro bills, saving all ratepayers about $11 a month — which applies to all urban centres, including Sudbury, North Bay, and Sault Ste. Marie.

But residents in rural, northern and remote communities — who pay a much higher delivery fee than other ratepayers — are getting even more of a reduction. Thibeault is introducing a bill in the legislature this week that, once passed and once it takes effect on Jan. 1, 2017, will reduce rates even further (by around 20 per cent) for some 340,000 Ontario residents.

"We're going to do more for northern and rural customers, the ones who face the highest delivery charge," Thibeault said.

That rebate will save customers who qualify about $45 a month on average.

For large industrial users, the Industrial Conservation Initiative has helped some of them cut their power costs considerably. Now, Thibeault said, Ontario is broadening the scope of that plan so around 1,000 more businesses will be able to take advantage of it.

"This is one of the largest of such programs in Ontario's history," the MPP said.

During the scrum after the formal portion of the press conference, Thibeault was asked about hydro price hikes and whether the province could do anything to keep prices lower and more affordable. The short answer, he said, was no.

"No utility can predict the future of prices," he said. "All government can do is to protect customers from rising costs" by legislating rebates and creating programs to help users access price reductions.

But Nipissing MPP Vic fedeli said today that "The Wynne government has introduced a band-aid solution to hydro rates without disclosing how they intend to pay for it."

“Yesterday, the government squandered an opportunity to provide families and seniors with meaningful relief from skyrocketing hydro rates. Instead, they introduced a new billion dollar band-aid that does nothing to actually reduce hydro costs,” said Fedeli.

“But what they didn’t tell us, was how they intend to pay for it,” Fedeli added.

The Financial Accountability Officer and others have recently warned that the province’s net debt is set to rise by over $50 billion by 2020-21 to a record $350 billion. Ontario will also remain the largest sub-national borrower on the planet. However, the Throne Speech made no mention of the Wynne government’s plan to deal with Ontario’s fiscal crisis.

“Let’s face it; they’re borrowing another billion dollars to do this. And that’s money that has to be paid back – plus interest,” continued Fedeli.

globeandmail.com

Ontario's new **electricity** policy: History repeats as farce; Karl Marx said that history repeats: first as tragedy, then as farce. In Ontario, the history of failed **energy** policy repeats - first as farce, and then as more farce

theglobeandmail.com
Tue Sep 13 2016, 6:00pm ET
Section: Other

Karl Marx said that history repeats: first as tragedy, then as farce. In Ontario, the history of failed **energy** policy repeats - first as farce, and then as more farce.

Premier Kathleen Wynne faces an election in a little over a year and a half, and one of the main issues dogging the Liberal government is the price of **electricity**. Thanks to policy choices that the government itself seems incapable of unwinding, **electricity** bills have been on an upward tear for a decade. Many voters are furious. And so the Wynne government devoted the heart of its Throne Speech this week to a plan to lower the price of **electricity**. Not the cost of **electricity**, however. Just the sticker price.

Taxpayers of Ontario, you will now be paying for more of your **electricity** through your taxes, or through future taxes funded by deficit financing, and less through your **electricity** bill. Yes, that's the new plan. It looks a lot like the old plan.

Nearly six years ago, Ms. Wynne's predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, was facing an election. He was, like the current premier, spooked by rapidly rising **electricity** prices. These spiking prices, note well, had been engineered by the Liberal government's mishandled Green **Energy** policy. To win back voters, Mr. McGuinty decided to give consumers a break. The tool: the so-called Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit, which ran from the start of 2011 to the end of 2015.

The Clean **Energy** Benefit did not have anything to do with clean **energy**, and its benefits were illusory. All consumer **hydro** bills were awarded a government **rebate** worth 10 per cent - so the more **electricity** a customer used, the more they saved. This "benefit" for Ontario consumers was paid for by Ontario taxpayers. Yes, they're the same people.

Given that the province was deeply in deficit at the time, that meant Queen's Park was borrowing money, solely for the purpose of immediately handing it over to **electricity** customers. Cash was being put into your right pocket, but you weren't supposed to notice that it was coming from your left.

In its final full year in operation, the province borrowed more than $1-billion to reduce everyone **electricity** bill. It was economically nuts. But it made sense politically.

And now it's back. The new **rebate** is eight per cent - achieved by eliminating the provincial sales **tax** portion of the harmonized **HST** from **electricity**, and only **electricity**.

Ask any economist: If your goal is lowering **energy** use and pollution, the last thing you want to do is provide a subsidy to **energy** users. Yet that's what this policy does. There may be arguments in favour of cutting taxes - but cutting the **tax** on **electricity**, and nothing else? Seriously?

Stranger still, this comes from a government that in this very same Throne Speech trumpets its plan to spend billions of dollars encouraging Ontarians to use less **electricity**. Billions spent subsidizing consumers into using less **electricity**, billions spend subsidizing them into using more. Did we mention the bit about farce?

The problem facing the Wynne government comes down to this simple fact: Year after year, **electricity** costs have been rising much faster than inflation. That's not happening across North America; on the contrary, many jurisdictions are enjoying exceptionally low **energy** costs. But more than a decade ago, Ontario's Liberal government decided that it would use the excuse of greening the **electricity** system - a perfectly good idea, if done right - to try to stimulate and subsidize the creation of new green industries in the province. The province essentially forced the **electricity** system to become more inefficient and more expensive, for no reason justified by economics or ecology.

Over the past 10 years, Canada's Consumer Price Index has increased by 17.6 per cent. But over the same period, according to the Ontario **Energy** Board, the cost to consumers of a kilowatt-hour of **electricity** purchased at the peak hours of the day has risen from 10.5 cents to 18 cents, a jump of 71 per cent. Mid-peak **electricity** prices are up 76 per cent. And the price of **electricity** in the middle of the night, known as off-peak, is up 149 per cent.

Ontarians who sense that their **electricity** bills are spiralling upward are not imagining things.

A century ago, when Sir Adam Beck created the public utility that went on to become Ontario **Hydro**, his slogan was, "Power at Cost." A century later, Ontario's motto might as well be, "artificially costly power, priced below cost, with taxpayers picking up the difference." What a mess.

By the time the next provincial election rolls around, the Liberals will have been in power for a decade and a half. Having done experimental surgery on the **electricity** system, they have no idea of how to cage their Frankenstein creation. So instead of fixing the fiasco, they are going to once again pay voters, with their own money, into not noticing it.

It worked last time.

Length: 833 words

Hydro rebate a permanent change, Kathleen Wynne tells Metro Morning

CBC.CA News
Tue Sep 13 2016, 10:52am ET
Section: Metro Morning
Byline: CBC News

A day after she hit the reset button on her government, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne discussed **hydro** rebates and other issues on CBC's Metro Morning Tuesday.

On Monday, Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell delivered a throne speech that outlined the government's priorities before the next election, which is expected in spring 2018.

Among the highlights was a **hydro** **rebate** for urban and rural residents and small businesses.

Under the plan, the government will remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** from **hydro** bills.

When asked how long the **rebate** will last, Wynne told Metro Morning Tuesday that the change is a permanent one.

"As far as we're concerned, this is a change that we are making permanently," Wynne said. "We haven't said this is something that we will do for a few months. This is something that we are putting in place and we believe it's the right thing to do."

The Liberals will introduce legislation that would call for the rebates to be applied directly to consumers' **electricity** bills. The **rebate** would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2017.

Wynne said Tuesday that the **hydro** **rebate** plan will cost about $1 billion. Asked where that money will come from, she would only say that, when public accounts come out in a few weeks, they will show that the government can afford the plan while sticking to its pledge to balance the budget next year.

Wynne said she understands that changes to the province's **electricity** system ? namely shuttering coal-fired plants ? have led to increased costs for rate-payers.

"I know people have been struggling to pay their **electricity** bills in many parts of the province, and so that's why we are making this change," she said. "But we couldn't do that until we were able to do it in a responsible way."

'Too little, too late'

The throne speech also outlined government promises to create 100,000 new child-care spaces, focus on math instruction after half of Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial math standard this year, and reduce wait times in the health-care system.

The opposition criticized the government over the **hydro** **rebate** plan. Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said after the speech that the plan is "too little, too late," calling it a "Band-Aid solution" for keeping rising **hydro** rates in check.

PC finance critic Vic Fedeli repeated that Tuesday, adding that the government should halt any further sale of **Hydro** One, as well as stop bringing surplus **energy** into the province's system.

"We are in a hole that they are going to keep digging," Fedeli told Metro Morning.

On the issue of selling **Hydro** One, Wynne said the move allows the government to take money from one asset and invest it in another, namely transit and transportation infrastructure and other priorities.

"All of that is about helping people get jobs, or for their communities to thrive, or for their kids to have a decent school to go to," Wynne said.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said the government should permanently remove **HST** from **hydro** bills, and that the **rebate** should start immediately.

Horwath told Metro Morning that her party never supported putting provincial sales **tax** on **hydro** bills, but called the government's move yesterday "a very small step."

"Both Liberals and Conservatives have gone in the direction of increasing privatization in our **electricity** system for decades now, and that is one of the underlying problems we have in an **electricity** system that was once public and run in the public interest and now is vastly private and run in the private interest," Horwath said Tuesday. "And that's where some of our major underlying costs are."

On the issue of adding more child-care spaces, Horwath said the high cost of child care and the quality of care must be addressed as well, noting that child-care costs are "crippling families."

'My job's not done'

Asked whether she will run in the next election, Wynne said she is "absolutely sticking around" for the 2018 vote.

"My job's not done," she said.

Wynne said she's listening to voters' needs on issues such as child care, retirement security and transit, and hopes they see that she is slowly implementing a plan to address these and other issues.

"All along we've been listening to people," she said. "We've put a plan in place and we've been making choices that are allowing us to implement that plan."

With files from Metro Morning

 Length: 731 words

Liberals' Hydro rebate not enough for Ontario, say critics

CBC.CA News

Tue Sep 13 2016, 9:18am ET
Section: Sudbury
Byline: CBC News

The New Democrat MPP for Nickel Belt says she doesn't think yesterday's throne speech announcement of a **hydro** break goes far enough.

Yesterday, the province announced it's introducing a **hydro** **rebate** for eligible Ontarians.

About 5 million families will be able to get a **rebate** on their **hydro** bills equal to the provincial portion of the **HST**.

On average, that will mean savings of $130 per year.

But taking off the provincial portion of the **tax** is not enough, said Nickel Belt MPP France Gelinas.

"People who come to see me, it's because their bill used to be $67 monthly equal billing. It is now $300," Gelinas said.

She argued that the province should instead address why **hydro** bills are going up so quickly.

Energy analyst Tom Adams said the plan sounds good for customers, but there are other factors that will affect **hydro** bills, including rate increases and the introduction of a cap and trade system for greenhouse emissions.

"Those factors will approximately offset all the savings that were announced," Adams said. "So in terms of net benefit, there's not much to go on here."

- Ontario **hydro** bill not enough to help struggling families, musician says

- **Hydro** One bill for $6,300 shocks Thunder Bay camp owner

With files from Martha Dillman. Edited/packaged by Casey Stranges

Length: 214 words

Ontario hydro bill not enough to help struggling families, musician says

CBC.CA News
Tue Sep 13 2016, 5:51am ET
Section: Toronto
Byline: CBC News

A Toronto dad struggling to pay his **hydro** bills blasted the province's plan to offset high **electricity** prices, calling it "a joke."

Bryant Didier, a musician, said he owes Toronto **Hydro** nearly $2,000. The company is threatening to cut off his power if he doesn't pay $863 in the next ten days. Didier said he's doing everything he can to pay the bill, but that he isn't sure he'll be able to cover it while looking after his two sons.

The Liberal government's proposal to remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** from **hydro** bills, which amounts to about $130 a year for a typical household, doesn't go far enough, Didier said.

"It's nothing," he told CBC News.

"It makes no difference to someone like me."

Didier said he's doing everything he can to use less **electricity**, but with the winter months looming he's getting concerned. His family already uses space heaters instead of his apartment's baseboard heaters and he puts plastic over every window. They wear extra layers indoors.

His home has issues with the insulation in the attic that his landlord, Toronto Community Housing, hasn't fixed. And Didier doesn't have the resources to modify the apartment to run on a different fuel source ? though at one point he was hoping to have solar panels installed.

Didier has had some help in the past from the Ontario **Energy** Board's Low-Income **Energy** Assistance Program (LEAP), though he said it's a lengthy process just to apply.

"It's arduous. You've got to provide months of income statements as well as banking statements as well as every piece of ID for your children and yourself," he said.

Fees, not provincial **tax**, the biggest **hydro** bill pain

His biggest problem, he said, are the additional charges that come along with his **hydro** bill, including the debt retirement charge, fees for delivery and regulation and the **tax**.

"I want to pay for the **hydro** I actually use, and not more," he said.

"It seems like I'm paying double what I should be every month."

For now, Didier continues to open his bills with a sense of dread and is hoping he can cut back in other areas enough to keep the **electricity** on.

"We have to skimp on everything ? we are in a constant state of compromise and watching our nickels," Didier said.

Length: 387 words

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

'Reboot' will help all: MPP

The Barrie Examiner
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Cheryl Browne

Giving Ontarians back some of their own money is the name of the new game at Queen's Park.

Premier Kathleen Wynne's reboot of the legislature saw a promise to cut its portion of the **HST** on **hydro** bills, as well as open up new daycare spaces during the next five years.

After Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell allowed Wynne's request to prorogue the 40th session of provincial parliament on Thursday, the premier reset the Liberal government's course at noon on Monday.

"Ontario's economy is still in transition, but our recovery is firmly on track," Wynne said. "While many are benefiting from the growth we've achieved, others have yet to share in Ontario's resurgence. Our government understands the challenges people face and shares their concerns."

To that end, the province says it intends to introduce legislation that would **rebate** a portion of the **HST** on **hydro** bills for homes, farms and small businesses as of Jan. 1, 2017.

"Before the **HST** was combined, the federal portion was 5% and 8% was the provincial portion," said Colin Campbell of Barrie MPP Ann Hoggarth's Queen's Park office.

Campbell said he expects residents and business would see an 8% **tax** savings on next year's bills.

The savings for urban residents and small businesses is expected to amount to $130 annually. Eligible rural ratepayers would see an additional average savings of about $45 per month or approximately $540 annually.

Hoggarth said the **energy**-savings announcement is not only good for people who live on farms and run small or big businesses, it goes beyond urban customers to help rural families who don't heat their homes with gas.

"Everybody is going to get some benefit from this," Hoggarth said.

She said now that Ontario is using clean and reliable **energy** they are able to ensure Ontarians' **hydro** bills would be more affordable.

"We're only able to do this because our plan is working. We weren't thinking we'd be able to balance the budget before 2017-

2018, but we now expect to be able to balance the budget next spring. But we also thought Ontarians should be the first to benefit from our fiscal management and they will with these savings on their **hydro** bill," she said.

Dowdeswell said beginning next year, the Ontario government will also create an additional 100,000 licensed childcare spaces during the next five years.

And, additional support for students would come in the form of expanding math skills - half of Ontario's Grade 6 students didn't meet the provincial average on Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests - and offering free tuition for thousands of low-and middle-income students.

But Progressive Conservative Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson was quick to insist that Monday's speech from the throne misses the mark.

"For 13 long years, every failed Liberal policy decision has made life harder and more unaffordable for Ontarians," said Wilson. "Today, Ontarians are paying the highest **electricity** rates in North America and no Throne Speech is going to change that."

For his part, Leader of the Opposition Patrick Brown said the Throne Speech is too little and too late.

Brown said the Liberals didn't believe **electricity** bills were "in crisis" in May when former **energy** minister Bob Chiarelli said "Ontario's residential rates are and will remain competitive."

"But, when this government loses its third consecutive byelection, in a riding that has been Liberal-held for over 20 years, it's a crisis," Brown said of the recent Scarborough-Rouge River byelection. "We've heard countless stories about Ontario families struggling to pay their bills or put food on the table. Where was this government then?" Yet Wynne insists the government is on track to help deliver on its promise to build Ontario up by cutting red tape for businesses and investing in low-carbon industries and creating a more innovationfriendly business environment. The premier also want to increase nursing care hours to enhance home care and cut wait times for specialists.

"With our balanced and proven plan to build Ontario up, we begin this new legislative session focused on economic growth that creates good jobs and committed to delivering real benefits and more inclusive growth that will help more people in their everyday lives," Wynne said.

CBrowne@postmedia.com Twitter.com/CherylBrowne1

Length: 689 words

NATIONAL POST

David Reevely: Kathleen Wynne looks to save her job by saving Ontario voters $130 a year on their hydro bills

News - National Post
Tue Sep 13 2016
Section: Canadian Politics
Byline: David Reevely, Ottawa Citizen

The provincial government is giving up $1 billion a year by taking its share of the sales **tax** off Ontario **electricity** bills, Premier Kathleen Wynne revealed in the speech from the throne for a new legislative session Monday.

It'll save the average household $130 a year, the government estimates. And, Wynne hopes, her job.

She began signalling that she at last understands Ontarians' dissatisfaction with **hydro** prices after her side lost a previously fairly solid Liberal seat in Scarborough in a byelection a couple of weeks ago. With the 2018 election visible in the distance, Wynne wants to be seen doing something about one of Ontario voters' most widely shared complaints: the fact **electricity** prices have roughly doubled over the last 10 years.

"Over the course of the past decade, Ontario **electricity** ratepayers have helped cover the costs associated with removing dirty coal-fired generation from our **electricity** system," begins the passage of the speech, delivered by Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, that deals with **hydro** prices.

In a long background document put out separately, the government spells out the thinking: "Rate relief is a responsible way to ensure people truly are able to benefit from their investment in a 21st century low-carbon grid to power Ontario's future... With the government's economic plan steadily strengthening Ontario's economy and fiscal position, the province is in a position to make another responsible, fair decision by further reducing the price that households and businesses across Ontario pay for **electricity**."

Who knows what this means. If the economy was weak before, presumably it was less able to carry the burden of high **electricity** prices. But they have to say something and it can't be, "We're scared **hydro** prices will kill us in 2018, so this is what we're doing."

How will the election-year budget be balanced with this big hit to government revenue? Not clear. What will it mean in later years? No clearer.

The provincial government can't unilaterally take part of the federal-provincial sales **tax** off **hydro** bills, so it'll add a line with a negative number on it that makes the total charge smaller rather than larger. Conveniently that'll also put it in your face every time you open a bill. It's an amount you'll notice.

Promoting efficiency and conservation would be honest ways of reducing household bills. A billion dollars a year would buy a lot of LED bulbs and water-heaters wraps and pull a lot of old fridges out of basements. Instead we get a blanket price cut for citizens and small businesses; only large consumers get a program to help them use **electricity** at cheaper times of day, details to come.

There'll be an extra **rebate** for rural customers. So people who live in dense, easier-to-serve communities will subsidize people who don't.

It's all bad policy but good politics. Both the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats have argued for cutting the **HST** from **hydro** bills - they can't exactly say it's a bad idea now. Plus the method weakens the bite of a still-unpopular sales **tax**.

Wynne hasn't been shy about her philosophy, but the conclusion of the throne speech put it plainly.

"As your government continues to build Ontario up, more will feel an increased sense of security," Dowdeswell read to the legislature. "Your government believes that government exists to do the things we cannot do alone. It exists to be a force for good in all our lives - every day and in every corner of this beautiful province we call home."

What are you worried about? This government wants to help you with it, especially if you're in the great mass of voters feeling precarious about your place in the middle class.

We will get you a doctor if you still don't have one, the speech promised. Yes, he or she might be furious about frozen pay and heavier work, but never mind. Your retirement will be provided for, thanks to our pressuring the feds. If you can't afford post-secondary tuition, it'll be free. There'll be more home care if your elderly parents need help, and - a new promise - another 100,000 licensed child-care spaces by 2022 so you can go to work.

That child-care promise echoes the Liberals' lead-up to the 2014 budget that triggered the election that year. It covers years well into the future, but by making the promise now the Liberals can treat it as a fait accompli and accuse the Progressive Conservatives of cutting child care if they don't adopt the promise as their own come the next campaign.

The Liberals won that one partly by espousing exactly the philosophy that guided Monday's throne speech. We Ontarians voted for majority-government numbers and it's hard to criticize Wynne for carrying on with it.

All these policies address real worries. Reasonable people can disagree about how many of them are properly the government's concern, but if you believe that government "exists to be a force for good in all our lives" (as opposed to, say, to protect our ability to provide for ourselves as much as possible), then health care, child care, home care, affordable higher education and retirement security will all be near the the top of any list of things to attend to.

The fact **electricity** costs a lot more than it used to probably would not. But you've got to get re-elected to do that other stuff, and when you can see annihilation slouching your way, you do what you have to do.

Length: 928 words
Permalink: news.nationalpost.com...»

St. Thomas Times-Journal

Hydro rebate nothing but political pandering, Yurek; Elgin-Middlesex- London MPP Jeff Yurek fearful proposed rebate may result in more debt

Times-Journal (St.Thomas)
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A3
Section: Local News
Byline: Jennifer Bieman

Ontario ratepayers are about to get an eight per cent break on their electricity bills - but not everyone thinks it's a bright idea.

Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP Jeff Yurek has a list of misgivings after Monday's throne speech, where Premier Kathleen Wynne announced taxpayers won't be on the hook for the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on hydro. The move will see an eight per cent rebate, an amount equal to the province's portion of the HST, added to monthly electricity bills.

"You continue to face electricity cost increases above the level of inflation," said Wynne in her speech.

"Whether in Kenora, Sudbury, Belleville, London or Barrie, your government has listened to and has heard your concerns. It recognizes that the cost of electricity is now stretching family budgets."

The government will introduce legislation to bring the eight percent rebate into effect and is aiming to have the program in place by Jan. 2017. The move will save the average household $130 each year on hydro, according to government estimates. Small businesses are also eligible for the rebate.

Where farmers and rural ratepayers are concerned, the government pledged to enhance the existing support program. "Together, the rebate of the provincial portion of the HST and the enhanced RRRP (Rural or Remote Electricity Protection) will provide eligible rural customers across Ontario with onbill monthly savings of about 20 per cent, or about $45 per month," said the government in a statement.

Though he's encouraged the government admits rising hydro costs are an important issue, Yurek said the moves don't do enough to stop the serious strain electricity prices are having on families.

"If Kathleen Wynne was really serious about tackling our energy rates, she'd first of all stop signing contracts for energy we don't need and stop selling off Hydro One. Under her plan, hydro rates are going to continue to escalate," said Yurek.

"This government's policies are the reason why our energy rates are continually increasing and until they tackle those issues we're going to continue to see energy rates remain unaffordable." Yurek has several problems with the plan, its timing, implementation and long-term implications.

He's wary the **rebate** savings for families will be offset by other increases. He's concerned the move is political pandering after the Liberal Party's loss in the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection.

But most of all, Yurek is unsure where the money for the **rebate** is actually coming from, since the cash the province gets from **HST** is already being used elsewhere.

"It will be interesting to see where the money comes from for this **rebate**. They're not really cutting off the **HST**, they're going to **rebate** the **HST** back. I'm fearful that this might go towards more debt in the **hydro** system," he said.

As for the proposed enhancements to the rural support program, Yurek said he's awaiting the specifics on how and when the new policies will come into effect.

"I'm just waiting to see what the details are. Everyone needs some relief on **energy** bills and my office will be waiting for the details so we can help people," he stressed.

Length: 514 words

'Solving' the problems that they create ; Take with one hand, give with the other

Toronto Sun
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A6
Section: News
Byline: Christina Blizzard

How clever Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals are.

They create expensive problems that hurt low and middle-income folk the most. Then they miraculously ride to the rescue - with even more costly fixes to the problems they created in the first place. In the throne speech delivered by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell Monday, the Wynne government outlined its way forward. The key is their pledge to remove the 8% provincial portion of the **HST** from your **electricity** bill.

So having created two problems - soaring **hydro** rates and the **HST** - they're now going to remedy those problems with their own half-baked remedies.

Why are **hydro** rates so high? Because the Liberals brought in their costly Green **Energy** Act and added a massive bureaucracy and an alphabet soup of agencies staffed with Liberal hacks.

They pushed the cost of **electricity** into the stratosphere with their wacky schemes and cosy deals. And apparently Wynne was the only person who didn't know the havoc they were wreaking.

Here I was writing column after column about seniors living on fixed incomes who were being driven into **hydro** poverty by the Liberals' cockamamie schemes - and no one in government noticed.

In a crafty sleight of hand, in 2014 they announced with great fanfare the removal of the Debt Reduction Charge, effective Dec. 31, 2015. What they quietly slid under the mat was that they were dropping the so-called Clean **Energy** Benefit that gave you a 10% **rebate** on the first 3,000 kilowatts of **electricity**.

They thought we were too dumb to notice. Except voters in Scarborough Rouge-River finally screamed loud enough in the recent bylection to wake up Rip Van Wynne and the rest of her Liberal trained seals.

We have a problem. We can't pay our bills. They didn't notice because they live in the Queen's Park bubble. They're cushioned from these exorbitant costs by fat-cat salaries. Ditto their friends in the civil service and public sector unions.

Finally, the shell game they played backfired. Nothing could hide the gouging on our bills.

So how are they going to pay for this so-called "relief"? Liberals claim in the throne speech that they'll balance their budget. They could be counting on money from their next major boondoggle - capand-trade. But those revenues are iffy. We're already looking at a $315-billion deficit.

So will they sell off another asset? After **Hydro** One, what's for sale next?

And who'll get the biggest boost from this **tax** break? Not the struggling seniors, trying to hang on to their homes. The wealthy few with their air conditioning and their pool heaters and their plug-in **electric** cars.

It's taxpayers subsidizing ratepayers. Meanwhile, the Liberals are pushing full-steam ahead with amendments to elections financing legislation that will ban MPPs from attending any fundraising event. Nonsense! An out-of-control, arrogant government is now seeking to entrench its power instead of dealing with their own mess - the cash-for-access scandal. Small-town corn roasts aren't the problem. Big ticket receptions where folk pay big bucks to hob-nob with cabinet ministers are.

Dowdeswell has the power to say enough's enough. This government has no moral authority to govern. We can't afford another two years of them wrecking this province with their nutty schemes and massive, out-of-control spending.

Dowdeswell should step in and dismiss the government. It's her privilege - and our very own recall legislation.

Everyone from the auditor to the ombudsman to the financial accountability officer has called them out.

It's time for them to go.

We don't need a throne speech to reset the legislature.

We need an election.

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Length: 597 words

TORONTO STAR

Liberal's hydro hack a quick political fix

Toronto Star
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A14
Section: News
Byline: Martin Regg Cohn

The 2018 Ontario election is underway today, two years early.

The first campaign announcement: **Hydro** bills will be reduced 8 per cent by January as an **HST** **rebate**, just in time for a positive pre-election impression.

It's a sop to those who hate the **HST**. And a victory for opposition politicians who have long goaded the government to cut taxes.

Which is precisely what this latest (and recurring) giveaway is. A **tax** cut - not a **hydro** **rebate**.

Pocketbook politics is back. And everything old is new again, courtesy of Monday's speech from the throne laying out the government's new (old) agenda - more of a reprise than a reset.

The Liberals have been down this path in the past, just before hitting the campaign trail in 2011. With **hydro** bills rising inexorably and the opposition clamouring for **tax** relief, the government dreamed up the "10-per-cent-off!" Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit in 2010.

Environmentalists and economists urged the Liberals to wean themselves from such shameless givebacks. And after profiting from two election victories, the Liberals let it lapse last year - mindful of their desperate fiscal straits.

Now, in desperate political straits, the Liberals have revived it.

Everyone knew it made for good politics but poor policy: Not only bad for cash flow, but bad for carbon flow because it reimbursed people for **energy** consumption, diminishing the disincentive of price signals.

It's a quick and dirty fix, not an enduring solution. If **hydro** costs are too high, try reducing subsidies for (renewable **energy**) producers upstream - not introducing subsidies for consumers downstream.

But everyone loves a **tax** cut. Even a pretend one.

Like Leon's, the Liberals are touting a **tax** holiday anew. Their **rebate** corresponds to the 8-percentage-point provincial portion of the 13-per-cent **HST** (the other 5 percentage points are Ottawa's business), averaging $130 a year per household.

The Progressive Conservatives proffered an **HST** exemption in the 2011 election campaign, but had second thoughts about their gimmick and dropped it in the 2014 campaign. Now, PC Leader Patrick Brown is all for it.

The New Democrats first dreamed up the so-called **HST** holiday in 2010, sounding like old-time Tory **tax** cutters. Even when the PCs abandoned it, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath re-offered her idea this summer and now gets bragging rights for forcing the government's hand - if piling on debt merits credit.

As shell games go, it's awfully hard to follow. A frequent criticism of the old 10-per-cent Clean **Energy** Benefit was that it merely transferred the burden of **electricity** costs from **hydro** ratepayers to taxpayers at large (it was described as transitional relief for the heavy expense of ridding Ontario of coal-fired power).

Now it's getting even sillier. The new measure is being sold as **tax** relief, but remember that the **HST** on **hydro** doesn't actually go into the coffers of local **electricity** companies, but is remitted to the provincial treasury. Conceptually, that means ratepayers aren't really getting relief from their **hydro** bills, just the **tax** they pay on **hydro**.

In that sense, it's a shell game within a shell game. The treasury is bankrolling this **tax** cut, so we'll ultimately be making it up through other income and other provincial taxes.

The Liberals giveth with one hand and taketh with the other.

Thanks to a steady economic recovery - Ontario's growth exceeded that of the U.S. earlier this year, and our unemployment rate is at an eight-year low - **tax** revenues are surging rapidly enough to cover this new **hydro** subsidy while still balancing the budget. But it's still a shell game, any way you subsidize it.

Far better for the government to address the realities of rising **electricity** rates, rather than proffering pretend **tax** breaks.

The same can be said for the opposition, who focus mostly on **HST** cuts and stopping the privatization of **Hydro** One, neither of which are remotely related to the underlying costs of generating power (and the ultimate price set by our independent regulator).

Stripped of its lofty pretensions, the latest manoeuvre is about digging the Liberals out of a political hole - by digging a trench against opposition attacks and laying the groundwork for the campaign trail. All at our expense, any way you cut it.

Martin Regg Cohn's political column appears Tuesday, Thursday and

Saturday. mcohn@thestar.ca,

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Length: 711 words

Throne speech all smoke and mirrors
Toronto Sun
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A17
Section: Comment
Byline: Jerry Agar

The Ontario Liberals took a step toward clinging to power Monday by fiddling with the power - again In Premier Kathleen Wynne's throne speech, the government said it plans to remove the provincial portion of the **HST** from **hydro** bills.

This because Wynne finally "gets it" that people are angry about **electricity** costs.

This 8% **rebate** was announced in the speech read by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

The average household will see $130 in savings annually.

Rural ratepayers will receive an additional 20% break, which would result in an additional $45 a month saving, or $540 a year.

Sound good? Of course. Who doesn't want a saving?

But will you really save money in the long run?

The speech was loaded with many ways the government plans to spend more of our money on new day care spaces, math teachers and promises to seniors, university students and aboriginals. How will the Liberals pay for all of that and balance the budget, as they insist they will, by 2017/2018?

It is easy to be cynical with this government after they tried so hard to hide the true cost of canceling power plants prior to the 2011 election, and now stand accused of improperly deleting the email record of what they did and who did it.

What is the true cost of lowering the **tax** on power bills?

Parker Gallant, VP of Wind Concerns Ontario and a former banker, believes rates will be increased in some way to make up the difference.

As he put it: "The implications of the proposed changes in the **electricity** file coming from the Throne speech appear to have the reverse effect on residential ratepayers. Rates will rise! Those who don't qualify for the Ontario **Electricity** Support

Program will be forced to absorb higher costs from the additional funds allocated to OESP recipients and the funds (unknown) destined for the revised Class A ratepayers. Until the latter has been clarified it is difficult to estimate how much this will drive up rates! This looks to be another action that the Auditor General would suggest could have benefited from a cost/benefit analysis."

It is possible the government will transfer funds from its planned cap-andtrade program to make up for the loss in **tax** revenue, but the carbon market Ontario is about to enter recently crashed.

Meanwhile we' re to believe the government has already saved us billions in **energy** costs.

We were told that removing dirty coal-fired generation from our **electricity** system created, "savings of more than $4 billion a year in health and other costs associated with smog and pollution from coal-fired generation."

We were told the government "renegotiated" its Green **Energy** Investment Agreement to reduce contract costs by $3.7 billion and created a new Large Renewable Procurement process, which saved another "$4.1 billion as compared to previous forecasts."

So that is almost $12 billion saved?

That is amazing considering that Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk reported last year that Ontario consumers paid $37 billion more than necessary on their **hydro** bills from 2006 to 2014.

Imagine how much worse it could have been. And despite all the "savings" we are now $300 billion in debt.

Does paying less **tax** on a higher price improve the household budget?

Or maybe it is all smoke (from a natural gas plant of course, not coal) and mirrors.

Agar hosts the 9 a.m. to noon show on NEWSTALK1010

Length: 553 words

Wynne's $1B Hydro giveaway; Throne speech offers up rebate to Ontario users
Toronto Sun
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A6
Section: News
Byline: Shawn Jeffords
Source: Political Bureau Chief

Liberal **Energy** Minister Glenn Thibeault insists that Ontario is in such good financial shape, it can afford to give away $1 billion by cutting the **HST** offhydro bills.

Thibeault made the comments moments after his government delivered a throne speech at Queen's Park, promising relief from soaring **hydro** rates, effective Jan. 1, 2017.

PC Leader Patrick Brown calls the throne speech a "Band-Aid solution." n Brown calls on the government to stop signing contracts under the Green **Energy** Act.

The NDP's Andrea Horwath questions how long the cut will last.

The Liberals will knock Ontario's 8% portion of the **HST** off the bill in the form of a **rebate**.

Oh, and Ontarians living in rural areas or the north can take 20% offtheir bills as a matter of "fairness," said Thibeault. "That is something we're very proud of because this is a meaningful savings for families," he said. "We've very happy to be doing this. We're in a fiscal position now where we've been doing all of the heavy-lifting over the last few years to make sure that we're going to balance."

The Liberal government has promised to balance the provincial budget by 2018.

Thibeault insisted the government can keep its budget plan and provide **hydro** relief.

"Over the last 10 years, we've done great things with our **energy** system," Thibeault said. "We've made it safe, we've made it reliable, and we've made it clean. Right now, we need to take it to the next level and make it as affordable as it can be for as many Ontarians as we can."

The **HST** cut will result in a $130 savings annually for the average household, according to the government.

The cut, which will appear as a **rebate** on bills, will apply to residential, agricultural and commercial **hydro** users. Rural ratepayers would receive a further break of 20% under the plan, which would result in an additional $45 a month, or $540 a year.

The government also announced it will create an additional 100,000 licensed child-care spaces for infants and pre-schoolers within five years, starting in 2017.

The throne speech, delivered by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, also pledged to make economic growth and jobs the government's top priority.

And the government moved to address the province's slumping math scores, promising to introduce new supports for students to help with numeracy skills. The new strategy will include having three "math lead" teachers in elementary schools.

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Length: 394 words

thespec.com

Rising **hydro** bills are continuing to shock the public

thespec.com
Tue Sep 13 2016
Section: News
Byline: jophardt@thespec.com

Ornella Montini has tried installing LED lights, reducing her air conditioning use, hang drying her laundry, and using **electricity** when prices are cheapest - but nothing seems to stop the rise of her **hydro** bill.

She has seen her home's monthly **electricity** bill rise from about $120 to more than $300 in the last five years with Burlington **Hydro**.

"How do you justify that kind of money?" asked Montini.

In an effort to combat negative reactions from rising **electricity** prices, the Liberal government announced Monday it would be cutting the province's eight-per-cent share of **HST** on power bills. Nine months ago, the province eliminated a 10-per-cent reduction on **electricity** bills in the form of the Clean **Energy** Benefit program.

The change will mean an average annual saving of about $130 for urban **hydro** users and $540 for rural.

Montini is skeptical that the **tax** break will negate price increases.

"They are going to keep raising the prices anyways," she said.

The cost of **electricity** at Montini's hair salon - Ornella Barber and Hair Styling - means she's now paying $600 in overages at the end of the year to bridge what's not covered by her rent. When she started her business five years ago, her **electricity** usage was completely covered.

"Mom and pop shops are having a hard time making a living - I'm making a loss," said Montini.

Montini is now reducing her grocery spending.

"Now, I do what I actually need, not what I want," said Montini. She has switched to eating more veggies, and even freezing cabbage while they're cheap to save money in the winter.

Robert and Charlotte Field of Simcoe have been struggling to find where their money is going. They live in an 2,400 square foot bungalow with only two residents. Their home is of similar construction and size to surrounding homes, but they pay a **Hydro** One bill that's about twice as expensive as their neighbours.

Following recommendations from **Hydro** One, the retired couple installed more efficient bulbs, replaced their aging fridge and freezer, and replaced their power-sucking television.

The couple follows time-of-use guidelines, their stove and water heater runs on gas, and they use a well for their water.

Charlotte says **Hydro** One has confirmed their meter is not an issue.

After all that work, their July **hydro** bill came in at $372. The couple pays monthly.

"It just boggles my mind," said Charlotte. "They've got to be wrong."

Charlotte said a **Hydro** One ombudsman response to their inquiry stated that the elimination of the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit, and increased rates likely caused the price of their bill to increase, despite their **energy** saving efforts.

Charlotte wasn't satisfied with the answer.

"Why do they promote **energy** savings, if it doesn't get rid of high bills?" asked Charlotte.

Hamiltonian Jim Warren is in a contract with a **hydro** retailer.

Even though he's locked in at a monthly rate, his "global adjustment" rate has been climbing.

The global adjustment fee has risen from about 3.5 c/kWh in the fall of 2010 to about 11.1 c/kWh on his April-May bill - giving him a $154.72 global adjustment fee on top of his $82.38 bill.

"It's impossible to understand how this is calculated. We're left in a position where we're simply being told what to pay," said Warren.

Protest planned

Mountain resident Sarah Warry-Poljanski has planned a protest in front of Hamilton city hall for Wednesday, Sept. 28 at 5 p.m. to let politicians know people are fed up with power bill shocks.

"Residents of Hamilton and all across Ontario have reached a breaking point," Sarah Warry-Poljanski says. What you need to know:

How much have rates risen?

Rates are set by the Ontario **Energy** Board twice per year - Nov. 1 and May 1. For most, prices are divided into off-peak, mid-peak, and on-peak rates, with off-peak being the cheapest.

In the last five years, off-peak prices have increased 47 per cent, mid-peak rates have risen 48 per cent, and on-peak peak prices have risen 67 per cent.

If you qualified for the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit program, you will also have lost the 10 per cent **rebate** effective Dec. 31, 2015. That loss will be offset by the province's eight-per-cent reduction of its share of **HST** on **hydro** bills.

How does Ontario stack up?

According to an August commentary from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, residents in this province paid more for home **energy** than those from Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia, but less than the Atlantic Provinces and Alberta in 2014 at $2,358 per household, including natural gas and **electricity**. But when looking at after-**tax** income, Ontarians spent similar amounts on home **energy** compared to Quebec and Manitoba, significantly less than the Atlantic Provinces and considerably more than British Columbia.

How are Hamiltonians coping?

An Ontario **Energy** Board report released this summer shows 856 more Horizon Utilities customers - the dominant **electric** utility in Hamilton - are 30 or more days behind the minimum payment period in 2015 than they were in 2013.

Horizon Utilities:

2013 - 10,996 customers behind, $1,541,792 in arrears

2015 - 11,852 customers behind, $1,767,196 in arrears.

"People are making impossible choices - pay the rent, buy groceries or pay for **hydro**," said Tom Cooper, the director for the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

What are people paying?

An **energy** spokesperson from the OEB said the average monthly **electricity** bill for a typical customer using about 750 kWh per month is about $150 in Ontario.

Using the Ontario **Energy** Board's home **energy** calculator, which sets the average home at 750 kWh per month (65 per cent off-peak, 17 per cent mid-peak, and 18 per cent on-peak), rural Ontarians pay more than $50 more per month than their urban counterparts:

Burlington **Hydro** Inc: $144.82

Horizon Utilities: $149.18

Hydro One - Low Density/Rural: $206.64; Medium Density: $178.95; Urban - $156.30

These prices include **electricity** only, not water.

Why do rural residents pay more?

The pricing structure of **Hydro** One's rural service is a snapshot of how prices differ from low density areas to urban areas. Because **electricity** prices also factor in delivery costs, less people using a specific delivery line, means the cost per customer rises.

How do I lower my bill?

The typical home uses about 60 per cent of its **energy** on heating and cooling, 20 per cent on water heating, 10 per cent on appliances, 5 per cent on lighting, and 5 per cent on space cooling.

Time of Use:

You can halve the cost of running appliances such as dishwashers, stoves, ovens, washers, and dryers by running them on off-peak hours. From 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. and on weekends **electricity** costs 8.7 c/kWh in the summer. From 7-11 a.m. and 5-7 a.m. it costs 13.2 c/kWh. At peak hours, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m., **electricity** costs 18 c/kWh. Mid- and on-peak hours vary in summer and winter.

Heating and cooling:

In the summer, the IESO recommends setting temperatures to 25 C while home and 28 C when away. For winter, the IESO recommends heating at 18 C.

Appliances:

An older fridge can use about 800 kWh per year. Newer **energy** efficient fridges can reduce that by about 400 kWh per year - potentially saving more than $50 annually. Suggested fridge settings are between -1 C to 6 C; the freezer should not be colder than -18C.

Consider using a microwave instead of an oven when possible, since it uses less power.

Other tips:

Check windows and doors - reducing drafts can save up to 30 per cent of your heating costs.

To calculate how much your appliances are costing you, visit **Hydro** One's handy cost calculator at hydroone.com.

How can you get help?

Save on **Energy** programs are offered by the Independent **Electricity** System Operator through your local utility.

At Horizon Utilities there are a number of Save on **Energy** coupons promoting $2-$30 off **energy** efficient products including lighting, ceiling fans and weatherstripping.

There are up to $650 in rebates available to those who install **energy** efficient cooling and heating systems through participating contractors:

The province also offers Ontario **Electricity** Support program. To find out if you are eligible visit ontarioelectricitysupport.ca.

What's on my bill?

On a typical bill, water and **electricity** charges are separated.

Electricity charges will usually be separated into off-peak, mid peak and on-peak usage for the billing period.

The delivery charge is the cost of delivering **electricity** from power stations to your home.

The regulatory charge is the cost of operating and running the **electricity** system and market.

The debt retirement charge, removed in 2015 for most customers, is a charge that goes toward paying down the debt from the former Ontario **Hydro**. Businesses will continue to pay the charge until 2018.

If your bill was higher than normal as a **Hydro** One customer, visit hydroone.com and find the high bill inquiry page.

What is causing rates to go up?

Independent **Electricity** System Operator spokesperson Chuck Farmer says the rising costs are, in-large part, due to necessary improvements to Ontario's grid over the last decade.

Those investments have served three purposes: restoring the reliability of the system, phasing out coal-fired power generation and moving to increase the amount of renewable **energy**.

The result, says Farmer, has been a much cleaner, reliable grid that doesn't suffer from the same amount of blackouts and brownouts as previous years.

Energy analyst Stephen Aplin says the drive to have wind and solar tackle carbon emissions is where the brunt of the blame lies for skyrocketing prices.

While solar produced 3.5 per cent of **electricity** in 2014, it accounted for 18.6 per cent of the cost, says Aplin. Nuclear produced 57.6 per cent of **electricity** and only accounted for 39.2 per cent of the total cost in 2014.

Since wind and solar do not produce continuous output, gas production of **electricity** is used to smooth out **electricity** consumption - eliminating some of the positive environmental effects of going green, said Aplin.

Will rates continue to go up?

According to the Ontario 2013 Long-Term **Energy** Plan, annual cost of producing **electricity** is forecast to peak in about 2023.

Farmer expects costs to stabilize over the next 10 years after the current period of investment in Ontario's grid.

Analyst Aplin believes costs will stabilize at a much higher price than we are seeing now.

The government still plans to double its wind capacity, says Aplin, and is signing more and more solar and wind contracts as we speak.

What is global adjustment?

In 2013, roughly two thirds of **electricity** costs came from global adjustment.

Though everyone pays global adjustment, it does not appear on regular bills.

While global adjustment does include any **tax** credit for greening homes, the bulk of global adjustment comes from closing the gap left between the fair market price of **electricity** and the contracted rates for **energy** producers.

If a wind producer is given a 13 c/kWh contract to operate, but fair market value for **electricity** is 3 c/kWh, that difference is paid for through global adjustment. This also applies when that **electricity** is sold to the U.S. for "fair market value."

Energy producers are also paid to keep plants on standby for peaks in demand. Because their contracts stipulate they be paid, global adjustment pays for the idle power plants.

Since **energy** producers are signing guaranteed contracts based on demand forecasts from the OEB, the global adjustment fee must also be raised when more **energy** is conserved than expected.

Length: 1856 words

NATIONAL POST

Letters: Keep the bad guys out

National Post
Tue Sep 13 2016
Section: Full Comment
Byline: Letters

…

'Ontario is sinking'

Re: Ontario And Its Mea Culpa((news.nationalpost.com»)), editorial, Sept. 13.

Rather than addressing the real reasons for Ontario's skyrocketing **hydro** costs (the sweet **energy** contracts given to Liberal friends who just happened to attend $10,000-a-plate dinners), the Liberal government is simply wasting more money. Meanwhile, the government is green-lighting more totally unneeded wind projects that should have Ontario taxpayers seeing red.

This is a government that knows no shame when it comes to prolonging its time at the public trough (think of the billions associated with the cancelled gas plants). **Hydro** ratepayers should donate the $134 **hydro** **rebate** and join in a class-action lawsuit to remove this motley crew. To paraphrase Gord Downie of The Tragically Hip, Ontario is sinking and we just wanna swim.

Bob Erwin, Ottawa.

…

Permalink: news.nationalpost.com...»

THE TRIBUNE

Hydro break 'insulting'; Ho-hum reaction to Throne Speech call for **electricity** rate relief

Welland Tribune
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Allan Benner

John Plentai says his Welland restaurant is paying thousands of dollars every month for the **electricity** it uses.

Although the provincial government's Throne Speech on Monday included plans it says will help small businesses and residents through rebates on the provincial portion of **HST** charged on **electricity** bills, Plentai fears it won't make much difference to The Blue Star.

"What's that?" Plentai asked of the **rebate**. "That's nothing."

The plan, announced in the speech read by by Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, says average ratepayers will save about $130 annually on their **electricity** bills as a result of the rebates, if they're approved and take effect in January.

Plentai said businesses like his already offset the **HST** they pay with the **tax** they collect on behalf of the government.

As such, he questioned how businesses will benefit.

"That's not right. It's insulting," he said.

"They're not giving us a break." Plentai said the escalating **electricity** rates are something people across the province should be protesting.

"We should organize," he said. "Seriously, we should organize something."

Threasa Watchorn, from Friends Over 55 Recreation Centre in Port Colborne, doubted the rebates would make much of a difference to the nonprofit organization she manages. "Whoop-dee-do. It's just a grasp at straws," she said, adding the plan seems to have more to do with earning votes for the Liberal government than really helping people.

Watchorn said she knows small business owners who are paying more than $2,000 a month on **electricity**. The seniors centre was charged more than $700 in August.

The non-profit Welland Curling Club has also been struggling under excessive **electricity** bills that have grown into the largest single expense in the club's annual budget, said president Matt Botden.

"Everything is a help, of course," he said.

However, he remains concerned about the details that have yet to be announced, such as who will qualify for the rebates, and how it will be administered.

"What do they mean by eligible?" he asked. "Sometimes it's tied to income levels, especially for consumers."

St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley said details will be announced later this week, likely addressing some of the questions people in the community have.

"The detailed information will come out," he said.

In addition, he said, "there are a number of programs that will benefit businesses.

"For individuals, this summer was particularly challenging," he said. "Most people last summer had their air conditioning on about three times. This summer, most of us had it on two months straight, day and night. You can really see that reflected in the size of the bills."

The provincial government's plan also includes additional assistance for an overall savings of about $540 a year for households, and an expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative for larger industries.

Bradley said that could amount to as much as 35 per cent in savings on **energy** costs for larger businesses.

"I think people will be looking for specifics on that," he said, adding the government has been focused on finding ways to reduce **electricity** costs since June.

Welland MPP Cindy Forster said the promised eight per cent **rebate** "is not much."

She said her own **electricity** bills are about $100 more per month than they were last year, but part of that could have been due to the excessive heat this year.

"But even without having a really hot summer, it would have been up by about 50 per cent," the NDP member said.

"People really are struggling." Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said the **rebate** is a step forward, but falls short of resolving the issue.

"They have got to stop any further sell-offof **Hydro** One," he said. "That certainly is an issue that they did not address, which is surprising to me because I thought they might."

He said his constituency office recently created an online petition regarding **electricity** rates, and "in just 24 hours we have 2,000 people, mostly in Niagara, sign our petition.

"That's a lot of signatures in a very short period of time," he said.

Niagara West-Glanbrook MPP Tim Hudak said the **electricity** **rebate** was part of his party's platform in 2011.

"But until you fix the underlying problems that are driving up **hydro** bills, that money will disappear pretty fast," said Hudak, who is leaving his position as MPP on Sept. 16.

Other benefits in the announcement include the creation of 100,000 more licensed child care spaces for children up to four years old within the next five years, implementing free tuition for thousands of low-and middle-income students, increasing nursing care hours, reducing medical wait times, and investing in schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and transit.

Gates said the announcement also lacks "a concrete plan to create jobs."

He was particularly concerned about the automotive manufacturing industry.

Length: 781 words

The London Free Press

Grits plug **hydro** savings; Area opposition MPPs say throne speech **HST** **rebate** vow is really about saving the Wynne government

London Free Press
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Jonathan Sher
Source: The London Free Press And The Canadian Press

Like wind turbines whose spinning provokes outrage in Southwest Ontario, the province ' s Liberals have spun **hydro** rates again, promising to scrap the **HST** just months after it swept aside a bigger benefit.

Starting in January, Ontarians will get an eight per cent **rebate** for the provincial share of the harmonized sales **tax**, while rural residents get even bigger reductions, the Liberals announced in Monday ' s throne speech opening the fall session of the legislature.

But opposition MPPs in London say Kathleen Wynne ' s government is concerned only about staying in power after losing a Grit stronghold Sept. 1 in the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection.

" This is an elaborate PR exercise ," London West New Democrat MPP Peggy Sattler said.

Just nine months ago, Ontario scrapped its so-called Clean **Energy** Benefit that cut **electricity** bills by 10 per cent. That program saved ratepayers about $130 a year, about the same as cutting eight percentage points off the **HST**.

The musical chairs-approach does nothing to restrain the cost of **electricity**, said Progressive Conservative MPP Jeff Yurek, who blames high provincial subsidies for wind and solar power.

" If they were really serious about **energy** rates, they ' d stop signing new contracts for **energy** we don ' t need ," the Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP said.

Taxpayers will have to make up the $1 billion in revenue lost from the **rebate**, and Yurek said he suspects the tab will be added to debt.

His concerns are shared by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which accused the Wynne Liberals of trying to bribe Ontarians with their own money.

" Our **electricity** bills grow at an average of eight per cent a year, so if we have a reduction of eight per cent in 2017, what ' s going to happen in the next year when they don ' t have an **HST** to cut ?" said Christine Van Geyn, spokesperson for the federation in Ontario.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault defended the change, saying, " It ' s important to recognize that we ' re doing something for our remote, rural and northern customers as well ." The government projects additional savings of about $540 a year for rural **electricity** customers.

The need for help in cities is apparent, too; the number of Londoners who have fallen behind paying **electricity** bills has grown from 11,077 in 2013 to 12,406 last year. Higher customer arrears also were found in St. Thomas, Woodstock, Sarnia and Chatham-Kent.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said it was the Liberals who put the **HST** on **electricity** bills in the first place.

" Six years later the premier says she ' ll **rebate** the **HST**, but people have to wait four more months ," Horwath said. " That raises a lot of questions about how long this **rebate** ' s going to last and how it will work ." The government said it has no end date yet for the **HST** cut.

PC Leader Patrick Brown said Wynne ignored years of complaints about rising **electricity** rates until the Liberals lost the recent byelection. " The problems of everyday Ontarians are never a problem until it ' s Premier Wynne ' s problem ." Other initiatives in the throne speech include a plan to create an additional 100,000 licensed child -care spaces for kids four and under over five years, starting in 2017.

" We ' re setting aside between $600 (million) to $750 million in terms of operating costs, and $1 (billion) to $3 billion in capital funds to make sure we deliver on our promise ," said Indira Naidoo-Harris, the associate education minister.

The throne speech was triggered by Wynne ' s move last week to prorogue the legislature, saying the government wanted to reset priorities midway through its mandate - the next election less than two years away.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the **electricity** portion of **hydro** bills for homes and small businesses rose 70 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

The NDP and Tories repeated their demands Monday that the Liberals stop selling more shares in Ontario ' s largest **electricity** transmission utility - **Hydro** One - warning further privatization will force **electricity** rates higher.

The Liberals say rates rose because Ontario stopped burning coal to generate **electricity** and invested heavily in transmission grid upgrades after years of neglect. They point out that the Ontario **Energy** Board sets rates, not **Hydro** One.

The throne speech also repeated the Liberals ' plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system in January, which the government predicts will add about $5 a month to home heating bills and about four cents a litre to the price of gasoline.

Length: 730 words

Brown, Horwath slam rebate plan
Toronto Sun
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A7
Section: News
Byline: Shawn Jeffords
Source: Political Bureau Chief

Just call it the "Raymond Cho **Hydro** Benefit."

That's what Progres -sive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown dubbed the 8% **HST** **rebate** on **hydro** bills announced Monday.

Brown said had it not been for Cho's recent breakthrough byelection victory in Scarborough-Rouge River, the government would have failed to address rising **hydro** rates.

"We should be calling it the Raymond Cho **Hydro** Benefit because if it wasn't for his victory in a Liberal stronghold less than two weeks ago, this government would still be ignoring the crisis," he said.

Brown called the measure a "Band-Aid solution" that

doesn't actually address the root cause of rising **hydro** rates.

He urged the government to stop signing contracts under the Green **Energy** Act and to halt the sale of **Hydro** One.

Brown said that with this new spending he doesn't think the Liberals will balance the budget in 2018 as promised.

"I still believe if you look at all of the commitments the government is making, that the numbers don't add up and they're not going to have a balanced budget," he said.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath questioned how long the **HST** **hydro** cut will last. As recently as last Friday, she had called on the government to do away with the **tax** on **electricity**.

sjeffords@postmedia.com

Length: 211 words

NATIONAL POST

Ontario and its mea culpa

National Post
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A7
Section: Opinion

Ontario's nearly 13-year-old Liberal government announced a slate of new, purportedly consumer-friendly initiatives Monday. In her speech from the throne, the lieutenant-governor said Premier Kathleen Wynne's government would create 100,000 child-care spaces, and drop the provincial share of the harmonized goods and sales **tax** from home **hydro** bills. There would also be targeted incentives aimed at lowering the punishing **hydro** bills paid by manufacturers - there are still some left, amazingly - and rural residents.

The throne speech, which followed the Liberals' recent byelection loss of a Toronto riding to the Progressive Conservatives, is clearly aimed at addressing the discontent many Ontarians feel with their government, particularly over basic pocketbook issues. The tone of the speech, on the whole, had a "we-feel-your-pain" vibe. It's the government, after all. And it's here to help.

The problem with this Liberal government, though, is how much time it spends fixing problems it created. The **hydro** file is the clearest example. Under premier Dalton McGuinty, it set out to turn Ontario into a green **energy** superpower. To do this, it offered virtually unbreakable long-term contracts at prices well above market rates, with the high cost justified by the need to convince Ontarians to take a chance on the new-fangled, expensive technology. The province did succeed in producing plenty of green power, which enabled it to phase out all coal-powered generation.

That's super. Green **energy** is lovely; coal is dirty. Cue birdsong and clear, blue skies. The problem, though, is that demand for **electricity**, thanks to a number of factors, including the province's manufacturing decline, has left Ontario with more power than it needs. The long-term contracts require Ontario to buy the green power at a premium price anyway, only to dump it, often at a loss, into the grids of neighbours, such as New York and Pennsylvania. The cost of this debacle, combined with squadrons of windmills marching across rural areas producing even more unneeded power, and money spent on (necessary) upgrades to the antiquated transmission grid, has been borne by ratepayers, whose bills seem to increase with the regularity of the changing seasons.

Even while acknowledging the pain felt by many Ontarians, and announcing the **HST rebate**, the government made a point of defending its policies. It boasted of having saved taxpayers billions through the renegotiation of some long-term contracts it had signed, essentially asking for credit for the belated work done on partially reversing the damage. It also claimed eliminating coalfired power generation has saved billions in health-care costs by improving air quality. (In case any one is wondering how those saved billions have benefited patients, it's worth remembering Ontario spends nearly half its budget on health care, is locked in an increasingly ugly spat with health-care workers over budget cuts it insists are necessary and faces stubbornly intractable wait-time challenges, while thousands of residents have no family doctor.)

Overall, the defence of the government's catastrophic handling of the province's **electricity** sector is typical of the Liberals' habit of giving themselves full credit for their noble intentions, while refusing to accept any blame for unintended, albeit foreseeable, consequences. While doubling the provincial debt since 2003, the Liberals have always insisted that their proposals were for the best, and critics simply didn't understand what they were trying to accomplish. On **hydro**, first it was about helping the environment, then it was about fostering a new greenenergy industry, now it's about cleaner air. Those are all laudable goals, but it's not enough to have nice ideas. A government must deliver those ideas in an efficient, intelligent way. Or, at least not-quite so ham-fistedly as the Liberals make a habit of doing.

And they clearly haven't learned much. Even while announcing the **HST** **rebate**, which will save the average household about $11 a month. the government also reaffirmed its commitment to rolling out a carbon **tax**, from 2017. Its estimated impact, for the average household, is about $13 a month, according to the government. In other words, it is boasting of its commitment to helping Ontarians by ... leaving them short a couple of bucks a month.

This is typical of the Liberals, sadly; and their childcare spaces pledge will likely prove as costly and dysfunctional. A speech from the throne simply isn't enough to demonstrate this government had learned anything from its multibillion-dollar mistakes.

Length: 714 words

Hydro rebate a "drop in the bucket," MPP Gretzky says

Windsor Star
Tue Sep 13 2016
Section: Local News
Byline: Chris Thompson, Windsor Star

An eight per cent **rebate** on **hydro** bills announced in Monday's provincial Throne Speech is "a drop in the bucket," Windsor West MPP Lisa Gretzky says.

And to prove her point she'll be dropping hundreds of **hydro** bills submitted to her by residents of Windsor-Essex on the desks of Premier Kathleen Wynne and **Energy** Minister Glenn Thibeault on Tuesday.

"This is a necessity," Gretzky said. "**Hydro** is a necessity and the Liberal government should have never put it (**HST**) on the bills to begin with."

Gretzky said the NDP have been pushing for five or six years to have the **HST** removed from **hydro** to no avail, and Monday's announcement falls short of that.

"They are offering an eight per cent **rebate**, which isn't the same," Gretzky said.

"They could cancel a **rebate** whenever they feel like cancelling it. It is a drop in the bucket really. It's not the solution to make **hydro** rates more affordable in the long run. "

As MPPs and dignitaries gathered in Queen's Park's legislative chamber, Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell read her first speech from the throne, which also included promises to improve the elementary math curriculum and more home and nursing care.

But the **hydro** issue drew the most attention from the opposition parties.

"One of the best announcements they could have made today is to a stop of the selloff of **Hydro** One," said Gretzky.

"They didn't make that announcement. That would have been a real solid step forward to get **energy** costs under control and they didn't do that."

Gretzky has collected hundreds of **hydro** bills from residents and companies in Windsor-Essex, copied them and blacked out the names and addresses.

When Gretzky rises in the house Tuesday, she will use those stacks of bills to prove a point.

"What I'm doing may not force them to do something like that (cancel selling **Hydro** One) but we've had in the last couple of weeks say there isn't a crisis, bills aren't that high. And people are really struggling," Gretzky said.

"Putting actual bills on their desks. They can't turn a blind eye when they're sitting there right in front of them."

Matt Marchand, the president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce, said lobbying by his group and others across the province made a difference.

"I think what you have to look at is the total cost structure in Ontario and it is one of the higher-end costs, particularly on the **electricity** side, we've gone from one of the lowest to one of the highest, so it's a step in the right direction," said Marchand.

"I don't know if we're all the way there in one session of parliament but I think it's a recognition that the cost of **electricity** needs to be lowered to attract and retain business and also for consumers to have money to spend."

chthpmpson@postmedia.com

Length: 480 words
Permalink: windsorstar.com...»

THE DAILY PRESS

Electricity bill **rebate** not enough; Northeastern officials say refunding **HST** on **electricity** bills doesn't solve high **energy** costs

The Timmins Daily Press
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Alan S. Hale

Disproportionately high **electricity** costs in Northeastern Ontario have been a lightning rod for criticism of the Ontario Liberal Government for years.

In the government's Throne Speech on Monday, the provincial Liberals proposed an 8% **rebate** on **electricity** bills as a remedy for the high cost of **electricity**.

The government announced it will **rebate** to consumers the provincial portion of the **HST** charged on **hydro** bills - a discount of 8% or $45 per month for an average household.

Mike Doody, a Timmins councillor and president of the Northeastern Ontario Municipal Association, said the **rebate** announcement shows the Liberals are trying to fix an issue that has become a source of intensifying anger toward them. But he thinks the government needs to offer much more than an **HST** **rebate** to neutralize it.

Doody said the offer of a **rebate** could be a sign the Liberals may reconsider their controversial plan to privatize **Hydro** One.

"It will be interesting to see the debate within the government over whether they should continue with their plan to sell off **Hydro** One," said Doody. "Certainly, the feeling I get from going to meetings - especially in Northeastern Ontario, but also province-wide - that most people are against the sale.

"I think the purpose of having this Throne Speech now is so that next week they can come out looking a bit better on how they've handled the **hydro** situation."

The Timmins Chamber of Commerce has been vocal for years about the need to address the **hydro** prices issue.

Nick Stewart, the chamber's manager of policy, said he is pleased to see the government finally taking some action.

However, he said an 8% discount is not nearly good enough.

"We appreciate that the government recognizes what Timmins businesses and the Timmins Chamber have been saying for some time: That **energy** rates are a major challenge to doing business in this province for some time. But we would also argue there is a long way to go" said Stewart. "Ontario's **energy** rates are the fastest rising in all of North America ... these subsidies are minimally helpful when **hydro** rates keep growing."

In Monday's speech, the government announced it would also try to bring price relief to industrial **hydro** users by expanding the eligibility criteria for the Industrial Conservation Initiative.

"Since 2011, the Industrial Conservation Initiative has encouraged large **electricity** users - primarily large industrial customers - to take on-site steps to shift consumption away from peak periods and lower their **electricity** costs by up to onethird," said Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, who delivered the Speech from the Throne on Monday afternoon.

"When fully implemented, participating industrial customers will be able to find cost savings of up to 34%, depending on their ability to reduce peak **electricity** consumption."

Stewart said that again the intention is in the right place, but the policy being proposed does not go far enough.

"This doesn't help the companies that are already making use of the Industrial Conservation Initiative. And chances are those same users are going to be facing fairly significant cap-and-trade costs," argued Stewart. "What we saw today really needs to be the starting point."

The new cap-and-trade system, which comes into effect the same day as the 8% **rebate**, looms over everything, said Stewart. All of this makes it next to impossible to predict what **energy** prices will be.

What the chamber would like to see is for the provincial government to reach out to the business community before going any further with changes to the **energy** system.

MPP John Vanthof (NDP -Timiskaming-Cochrane) suggested the Liberals are running scared because of the **hydro** issue - and with good reason.

Recent polls show a steady decline in support, and the recent by-election loss to the Tories in the Liberal stronghold of Scarborough-Rouge River are all the result of the government's mishandling of the **hydro** prices, Vanthof suggested.

"It's sad. People have been telling them for so long that Ontarians are seriously in trouble because of **hydro** prices, and it's sad that they had to wait for popularity polls before they would help those people," said Vanthof. "They're feeling very vulnerable, and in my opinion, that's the only reason they're acting."

Infrastructure, another important issue for Timmins and the Northeast, was also addressed in the Throne Speech with the government promising to spend $160 billion over 12 years on infrastructure - everything from roads to rail service.

That's all well and good, said Vanthof, but there needs to be measures in place to make sure that Northern Ontario doesn't take a back seat to Southern Ontario when it comes to getting that money.

"I don't begrudge the people in Toronto for getting transit, but by the same token, we have to fight tooth-and-nail in Northern Ontario just to maintain our bus service," said the MPP. "We should be treated equitably."

Doody added, Northern municipalities need a better deal on accessing infrastructure funding, but the only way that will happen, he suggested, is if the federal government gets involved.

"What we have discussed at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is that we think the feds have to be talking with the provincial people to try to get money to small municipalities, and do it without all the red tape that they have now," said Doody. "In fact, we are asking the federal government to send any infrastructure money available directly to municipalities, instead of going through the province."

Out of the entirety of Monday's Throne Speech, the Ring of Fire was mention just once, with a one-sentence promise to "work with First Nations and other partners to move forward with greater access to the Ring of Fire."

Every year, said Vanthof, the massive mining project appears to get less and less attention from Queen's Park.

"The Ring of Fire has had an honourable mention in every Throne Speech at least since I've been elected (five years). It gets mentioned every year, and every year it gets a little bit less," said Vanthof. "I think it's time all Northern Ontarians demand they act on the Ring of Fire, instead of just mentioning it every Throne Speech."

For the most part, the Liberal government in Queen's Park promised more of the same in the Speech from the Throne on Monday afternoon - with **electricity** prices being the major exception.

On issues such as health care, education, and infrastructure the government is promising to maintain the course it has set itself upon in past years.

But when it came to **electricity** prices, the Liberals are trying to bring relief to those who have seen their bills skyrocket in recent years.

In the Throne Speech, the government admitted - what many people have been arguing for some time - that their push for more renewable **energy** use in Ontario has caused the high prices that have hurt average consumers.

"Over the course of the past decade, Ontario **electricity** ratepayers have helped cover the costs associated with removing dirty coal-fired generation from our **electricity** system," said Dowdeswell.

"And while these investments have resulted in increased costs associated with generation, they have also created savings of more than $4 billion a year in health and other costs associated with smog and pollution from coalfired generation."

Length: 1197 words

NIAGARA FALLS
REVIEW

Rebate 'just a grasp at straws'; Ho-hum reaction to Throne Speech's call for lower hydro rates

Niagara Falls Review
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A3
Section: News
Byline: Allan Benner
Source: Postmedia Network

John Plentai says his Welland restaurant is paying thousands of dollars every month for the **electricity** it uses.

Although the provincial government's Throne Speech on Monday included plans it says will help small businesses and residents through rebates on the provincial portion of **HST** charged on **electricity** bills, Plentai fears it won't make much difference to The Blue Star.

"What's that?" Plentai asked of the **rebate**. "That's nothing."

The plan, announced in the speech read by by Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, says average ratepayers will save about $130 annually on their **electricity** bills as a result of the rebates, if they're approved and take effect in January.

Plentai said businesses like his already offset the **HST** they pay with the **tax** they collect on behalf of the government.

As such, he questioned how businesses will benefit.

"That's not right. It's insulting," he said.

"They're not giving us a break." Plentai said the escalating **electricity** rates are something people across the province should be protesting.

"We should organize," he said. "Seriously, we should organize something." Threasa Watchorn, from Friends Over 55 Recreation Centre in Port Colborne, doubted the rebates would make much of a difference to the non-profit organization she manages.

"Whoop-dee-do. It's just a grasp at straws," she said, adding the plan seems to have more to do with earning votes for the Liberal government than really helping people.

Watchorn said she knows small business owners who are paying more than $2,000 a month on **electricity**. The seniors centre was charged more than $700 in August.

The non-profit Welland Curling Club has also been struggling under excessive **electricity** bills that have grown into the largest single expense in the club's annual budget, said president Matt Botden.

"Everything is a help, of course," he said.

However, he remains concerned about the details that have yet to be announced, such as who will qualify for the rebates, and how it will be administered.

"What do they mean by eligible?" he asked. "Sometimes it's tied to income levels, especially for consumers."

St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley said details will be announced later this week, likely addressing some of the questions people in the community have.

"The detailed information will come out," he said.

In addition, he said, "there are a number of programs that will benefit businesses.

"For individuals, this summer was particularly challenging," he said. "Most people last summer had their air conditioning on about three times. This summer, most of us had it on two months straight, day and night. You can really see that reflected in the size of the bills."

The provincial government's plan also includes additional assistance for an overall savings of about $540 a year for households, and an expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative for larger industries.

Bradley said that could amount to as much as 35 per cent in savings on **energy** costs for larger businesses.

"I think people will be looking for specifics on that," he said, adding the government has been focused on finding ways to reduce **electricity** costs since June.

Welland MPP Cindy Forster said the promised eight per cent **rebate** "is not much."

She said her own **electricity** bills are about $100 more per month than they were last year, but part of that could have been due to the excessive heat this year.

"But even without having a really hot summer, it would have been up by about 50 per cent," the NDP member said.

"People really are struggling." Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said the **rebate** is a step forward, but falls short of resolving the issue.

"They have got to stop any further sell-offof **Hydro** One," he said. "That certainly is an issue that they did not address, which is surprising to me because I thought they might."

He said his constituency office recently created an online petition regarding **electricity** rates, and "in just 24 hours we have 2,000 people, mostly in Niagara, sign our petition.

"That's a lot of signatures in a very short period of time," he said.

Niagara West-Glanbrook MPP Tim Hudak said the **electricity** **rebate** was part of his party's platform in 2011.

"But until you fix the underlying problems that are driving up **hydro** bills, that money will disappear pretty fast," said Hudak, who is leaving his position as MPP on Sept. 16.

Other benefits in the announcement include the creation of 100,000 more licensed child care spaces for children up to four years old within the next five years, implementing free tuition for thousands of low-and middle-income students, increasing nursing care hours, reducing medical wait times, and investing in schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and transit.

Gates said the announcement also lacks "a concrete plan to create jobs."

He was particularly concerned about the automotive manufacturing industry.

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Length: 793 words

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ontario won't give specifics on how it will pay for billions in new promises; Liberals won't specify how new pledges funded
Canadian Press
Tue Sep 13 2016
Section: Ontario
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - The Ontario government's throne speech came with billions of dollars in new promises, but the opposition parties are questioning how the Liberals plan to pay for them.

Lower **electricity** bills and more child-care spaces are on the way, the government announced in its speech outlining priorities for the new session. Removing the eight-per-cent provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** from **hydro** bills is expected to cost taxpayers about $1 billion a year.

Creating an additional 100,000 licensed child-care spaces for children aged four and under will cost $600 million to $750 million in operating costs and $1 billion to $3 billion in capital funds over five years.

But the Liberals were vague Tuesday when asked where that money would come from, while insisting that they will still eliminate the deficit next year.

"The economic growth that has happened, we've had six-per-cent growth over the last two years, we're projecting 2.5 to three-per-cent growth over the next couple of years, so we actually have been able to see those results because of the investments that we've made...so we're in a position to take further steps on both of these fronts," Premier Kathleen Wynne said.

The Liberal government has promised it would balance the books by 2017-18, so the next budget should see a return to the black.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa suggested there had been room in the budget.

"In the last budget I provided for larger levels of reserves and contingencies to accommodate the ability to start giving back as the economy improved," he said. "We had to assess the economic rebound and as it's proceeding and as we are coming to balance we're able now to provide some more accommodations."

When asked if the new money would come from a $1-billion reserve fund from the last budget or about $1.2 billion in contingency funds, a spokeswoman for Sousa said the upcoming fall economic statement and the 2017 budget would contain details on how the latest commitments fit in the government's fiscal plan.

"In the first quarter of this year Ontario posted higher real GDP growth than Canada, the U.S. and all G7 countries," Kelsey Ingram said in an email. "Our economy is growing which is allowing us to make important investments in **energy** relief and childcare.

Ivey School of Business economist Mike Moffatt said it's possible the government will use some of a reserve fund, but likely they've saved money from making pessimistic interest rate projections.

"(In their budgets) they make assumptions that interest rates are going to rise and are going to rise fairly rapidly," he said. "If anything interest rates have gone down since budget 2016. That saves the government quite a bit of money."

The child-care funding could be backloaded and not really affect the next budget, Moffatt said, but they will have to find that billion dollars for the **hydro** pledge.

"I think the balanced budget is one of those hell-or-high-water-type promises for them, so I think they've done the calculations internally and realized they do have a bit of a cushion to use and they've chosen to use it this way," he said.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said the promises didn't add up.

"The government's spending promises - it seems the more desperate they get, the lower they get in public opinion, the more promises they make that aren't funded," he said.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath suggested the budget will only be balanced by counting revenues from the partial sale of **Hydro** One.

Length: 575 words

THE PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER

Leal pleased with lifting of sales tax from hydro bills

Peterborough Examiner
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Jessica Nyznik

With **electricity** rates top of mind for constituents, Peterborough's MPP is pleased with the Ontario government's latest plans announced during its Throne Speech Monday.

The provincial government has promised to cut the 8 per cent provincial sales **tax** off **hydro** bills as of Jan. 1. Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister and Peterborough MPP JeffLeal said he's been meeting with constituents in the riding, both from the city and the county, over the last few months.

"The number one issue on everybody's mind has been **electricity** rates," Leal said, adding he's pleased to see that issue being addressed.

Rural consumers, who face higher delivery and transmission fees, will get extra relief. They'll get an additional 12 per cent cut on top of the PST knock off.

"We're going to increase the rural-rate plan to bring about more fairness for rural consumers, which will also impact both businesses and farming operations in rural communities," said Leal.

While the removal of the PST and the additional cut provided to rural residents is significant, Leal said, the government still recognizes there's some "systemic issues" regarding agencies delivering **electricity**.

"We're also prepared to look at that aspect of the **electricity** sector too," he said.

The Ontario government also announced it'll be adding 100,000 new child-care spaces, improving the elementary math curriculum and increasing nursing and home care hours.

New child-care spaces are to be created over the next five years, starting in 2017.

The added spaces will help address another issue Leal said he often hears about from middle-class families.

"This is a very important initiative for the riding of Peterborough," he said.

To improve math skills, the province pledged that up to three lead math teachers will be added in all elementary schools.

"We know through recent EQOA scores that we need to brush up on our math skills a bit and we want to make sure that happens," Leal said.

A promise to add up to 350,000 home care nursing hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support was also made.

"Additional nursing hours through home care are real priority items."

Leal said he thinks his government is hearing what Ontarians are saying and taking note.

"We're pleased that when you listen to people and through that to hear their concerns reflected today from the speech from the throne."

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes Brock Progressive Conservative MPP Laurie Scott was not impressed with the announcement.

She called the Throne Speech "magic beans politicking at its worst," in a release.

Scott thought the timing was "more than suspect" after the Ontario government lost a member in the Scarborough-Rouge River by-election to Conservatives 12 days ago.

Though the Ontario government announced a "new direction" Monday, she stated there's nothing new about it.

Electricity costs continue to devastate households, especially in rural areas with the skyrocketing cost of delivery, he wrote.

What's ironic, he stated, is that the Wynne government is now trying to remove the cost of PST on **electricity** bills that they implemented.

"Clearly the Wynne government is in panic mode to think anyone will fall for this magic beans trick," Scott stated.

JNyznik@postmedia.com

Length: 520 words

The London Free Press

Giving and taking

London Free Press
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A5
Section: Opinion
Byline: Jim White
Dateline: London

Regarding the online article Liberals promise 8 % cut to **hydro** bill (Sept. 12).

So, Premier Kathleen Wynne, please explain again how you are going to help me pay my bills ? You just announced that, starting in January, my **electricity** bill will go down by $10 a month. Is it just a coincidence that also in January, the new carbon **tax** will cost me $13 a month ? Time for you to go, Kathleen.

Jim White

London

Story Type: Letter
Length: 71 words

Chatham Daily News

MPP says Liberals playing 'shell game' with hydro rates; Nicholls believes provincial budget will be balanced on 'backs of Ontarians'

The Chatham Daily News
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Ellwood Shreve

Rick Nicholls said the Liberal government's attempt to "hit the reset button" by proroguing government last week and delivering a throne speech on Monday "is just too little too late."

The Chatham-Kent Essex MPP is particularly critical of Kathleen Wynne's government's attempt to address skyrocketing **electricity** rates with a promise to knock off the eight-per-cent provincial portion of the **HST** offenergy bills. "This government is using a band-aid solution on a gash that requires sutures," Nicholls said.

He points to the fact about a year ago the Liberal government removed the Clean **Energy** Benefit, which saved consumers about 10 per cent on their **energy** bills.

"And now they want to give you an eight-per-cent reduction," Nicholls said. "It's a shell game."

The MPP said he found it interesting that earlier this summer, Ontario **Energy** Minister Glenn Thibeault stated he had no idea how many people in Ontario were behind on their **electricity** bills.

Citing that 8.2 per cent of Ontario households are in arrears on their **hydro** bills, Nicholls said, "if that doesn't spell crisis, I don't know what does. But he (Thibeault) didn't seem to think it was a crisis at that time."

"If Wynne and her Liberal government were serious about addressing the **Hydro** One crisis. .. then they need to halt any further sales of **Hydro** One shares," he said.

"Stop signing expensive contracts for **energy** we don't need," he added.

Nicholls said another alarming situation is happening with utilities when people will start paying **tax** on natural gas usage beginning in January.

Noting just like it is not clear about everything that constitutes the delivery charges on **hydro** bills, Nicholls is concerned the

public also won't get the full picture regarding a new **tax** on natural gas.

"I believe that the Liberal government lobbied the Ontario **Energy** Board and said, 'We don't want that cap-and-trade **tax** on natural gas. .. as separate line item (on bills). We want it buried in the total of delivery charges,'" he said.

He added the Liberals never mentioned natural gas once in the throne speech.

Nicholls is also concerned about how the Liberals will live up to a promise to balance the budget.

"Trust me. .. it will be on the backs of Ontarians," he said.

Nicholls believes from now until the end of June, the Liberals will be introducing bills "that'll make your head spin -all trying to balance the budget."

Then in the final year before the 2018 election, he predicts, "they're going to play kiss and make up."

Some of the other promises outlined in Monday's throne speech include: creating 100,000 childcare spaces over five years beginning in 2017; adding up 350,00 homeware nursing hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support; and improving math skills by having up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools.

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Length: 477 words

Wynne locks in soaring hydro rates

Toronto Sun
Tue Sep 13 2016
Page: A16
Section: Comment

Premier Kathleen Wynne announced Monday that on Jan. 1, 2017, she's removing the 8% provincial sales **tax** on the **electricity** bills of Ontarians.

That's the 8% **tax** her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, imposed on Ontarians' **hydro** bills for the first time ever on July 1, 2010.

This when he harmonized Ontario's 8% sales **tax** with the feds' 5% goods and services **tax**.

While Wynne claims this initiative will save $130 annually on the average household's **electricity** bill, and, along with other programs, $540 annually for qualified rural residents, it does nothing to address the reason **hydro** rates are skyrocketing.

That is the Liberals' continuing, economically insane pursuit of expensive and unreliable wind and solar power, which makes the **electricity** grid run less efficiently, producing power that isn't needed because Ontario has an **energy** surplus.

While some of the **hydro** rate increases are due to necessary upgrades to the power grid, former auditor general Jim McCarter reported in 2011 that using the Liberals' own numbers, **hydro** rates would increase by 7.9% annually over the next five years, "with 56% of that increase due mainly to renewable **energy**."

In 2015, current auditor general Bonnie Lysyk reported Ontarians paid $37 billion more than the market price for **electricity** from 2006 to 2014, rising to $133 billion by 2032.

Wynne insisted Monday the Liberals' elimination of coal-fired **electricity** plants is saving Ontarians $4 billion annually in health costs.

But even if that number is true - and there's no way to confirm it - the Liberals didn't replace coal with wind and solar power.

They used nuclear power and natural gas.

Wind and solar power couldn't replace coal because coal in 2003 provided 25% of Ontario's **electricity**, while wind and solar last year produced just 4%.

Further, wind and solar power, unlike coal, can't provide base load power to the **electricity** grid on demand and have to be backed up by natural gas.

What's really happened is that the Liberals have wasted billions of public dollars on wind and solar power they never needed to spend to achieve the environmental benefits of ending coal use.

Nothing Wynne said on Monday changes that and nothing is going to stop continued rapid price hikes to **electricity** costs across Ontario.

Length: 349 words

Wynne Government Promises Hydro Rebate

- **blackburnnews.ca**
- **Mon Sep 12 2016**
- **Byline:** Dave Dentinger
- Permalink

Ontario's liberal government says it will introduce legislation to rebate the provincial portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax on electricity bills effective January 1, 2017.

Details are included in Monday's throne speech, opening the second session of the province's 41st parliament.

If passed, the rebate will benefit residential, farm and small businesses, saving the typical household about $130 a year.

Bluewater Power CEO Janice McMichael-Dennis says every little bit helps, but says it will be up to the customers to decide whether it's enough.

"It will equate to approximately an $11 per month bill reduction for that average residential customer," says McMichael-Dennis.

"That will be applicable right across the province for non-rural Hydro One customers."

She says it comes at a good time for ratepayers.

"This will help with the end of the 10% bill credit which recently just ended. This will help fill that hole that was left by the ending of that program."

The government says eligible rural ratepayers would receive additional relief resulting in average savings of about $45 a month or $540 annually.

The throne speech also promises the creation of an additional 100,000 licenced infant to preschool child care spaces within the next five years.

Despite the new promises, the Kathleen Wynne government says it will balance the budget in 2017-2018.

It says over the last two years, Ontario's economy has grown by 6.1 % and unemployment, this year, has reached an eight-year low.

Local MPP's Call Throne Speech "Out of Touch"

- **blackburnnews.ca**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**
- **Byline:** Janice Mackay
- Permalink

Huron Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson says the government is taking taxpayer dollars to pay for their promise to cut the 8% portion of the HST from Hydro bills.

Thompson says if Premier Kathleen Wynne really was serious about addressing the crisis caused by rising electricity rates she would have promised to halt any new expensive energy contracts.

Thompson says yesterday's throne speech confirmed for her that the Liberal government is out of steam and out of touch.

She says after years of ignoring skyrocketing electricity prices, the provincial government suddenly recognised the ongoing crisis after losing a by-election.

"Ontarians and the PC Party have been claiming for years that electricity rates are at a crisis point, but our concerns have repeatedly been ignored until just last week, after residents in Scarborough-Rouge River decisively elected a Progressive Conservative MPP. Today's commitment to repair our damaged energy sector is nothing but empty rhetoric. She has had thirteen years to do something, but only chose to act when it served to benefit herself and her Liberal Party. It is painfully clear that all the Premier is doing is trying to win favour with Ontarians before she has to face them again in another by-election. If she was serious, she would've repealed the Green Energy Act.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker says the Ontario Liberals are trying to pull their same-old tricks by offering more promises on the backs of taxpayers.

In response to the provincial Liberals' Throne Speech at Queen's Park, Walker says the government's plan to cut 8 per cent from Hydro bills is a zero-sum game, as it will coincide with the arrival of the new massive carbon tax, a projected $1.9 billion tax increase that will raise the cost of virtually every product in Ontario.

He also concludes the Liberals' monthly rebate plan won't save small businesses from closure.

“What the Liberals don’t want you to know is that the promised relief on electricity bills won’t last,” he explains. “Ontarians will again suffer a hit to their wallet after the government rolls out its new carbon tax. Therefore, whatever gains they promised today, they will in fact take away come carbon-tax time.”

“Furthermore,” he adds, “comparing their offer of a $45-monthly rebate against the average annual increase of $1,000 in hydro bills is nothing but disrespect for Ontarians.”

The MPP for Perth-Wellington feels the government’s Throne Speech is mostly a rehash of old Liberal policies that will do little for our local communities.

Randy Pettapiece stated that for 13 years, the Liberal government has made life harder and more unaffordable, and no Throne Speech is going to change that.

Any rebate will be dwarfed by hydro rate increases in the years to come, Pettapiece said. “We can expect even more increases as long as the government continues shovelling money into industrial wind turbines to produce power the province does not need.”

As the new legislative session begins, Pettapiece pointed to some of the local priorities he plans to champion: affordable hydro; access to healthcare, including a new Stratford Perth Residential Hospice; rural transit options; agriculture; and jobs and the economy. He also plans to introduce his private member’s bill to improve safety for firefighters.

Thibeault: HST hydro rebate will cost $1B

- **sudbury.com**
- **Mon Sep 12 2016**
- Permalink

It's going to cost $1 billion to offer Ontarians HST relief on their tax bills, says Ontario Energy Minister and Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault.

But it's a cost the province can afford, Thibeault said Monday following the Speech from the Throne delivered by Ontario Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

Much of Dowdeswell's speech focused on hydro rates, including a three-point plan to lower bills. It includes an eight per cent rebate, which amounts to the provincial portion of the 13 per cent HST, on electricity bills starting in January.

The plan also include a 20 per cent rebate on hydro bills for residents in rural and northern areas, and the expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative, a program that helps large electricity users cut their bills by as much as 34 per cent by shifting hydro use away from peak periods.

Thibeault said his first major set of policy announcements won't affect the province's plans to balance the books ahead of the 2018 provincial election.

"When it comes to costs specifically relating to the provincial portion of the HST, that's $1 billion in tax savings that we're making sure is going back to the people of Ontario," he said.

"We're doing that now because we've been able to do a lot of the heavy lifting and make sure we're able to balance our budget next year.

“We can afford this now. The people who need to benefit first from this are the Ontario families that actually had to help us get here."

At least part of those policies were a result of a recent tour by Premier Kathleen Wynne, who heard from residents they were struggling with soaring hydro rates.

"She heard loud and clear from northerners and folks in rural communities that something needs to be done about electricity rates, and she heard the same thing from businesses," Thibeault said.

"So our three-point plan is doing just that. We're rebating the provincial portion of the HST on everyone's bills. The folks that live in Northern, rural and remote communities, they've been seeing what the delivery charge is. They've been seeing significant costs related to the delivery charge. We're actually bringing forward a plan that will see their reduction by about 20 per cent."

And medium and larger businesses “can save up to 34 per cent a month on their bills,” he said, if they participate in conservation programs.

“That's a significant savings," Thibeault said. "I'm very proud (that) my very first policy bringing forward as energy minister to make sure we're finding ways to help families and to help businesses right across the province save a bit of money."

But Nickel Belt MPP France Gélinas said Monday's announcement ignores the fact that the government created the current hydro problems and forced consumers to pay higher rates because of things like the gas plant scandal in 2011, when two contracts were cancelled to help candidates in Oakville and Mississauga.

"To save a few Liberal seats, it cost each and every one of us $1 billion," Gélinas said. “Today, they threw us a bone ... They are not making decisions for the good of the Ontario population right now, and people are starting to make their voices louder and louder.

"The fiscal decisions they have made have benefited a select few, at the expense of all of us who pay more."

The throne speech also ignores the unpopular partial privatization of Hydro One, she said. The Liberals stopped the work of the previous session of the Ontario Legislature while ignoring what residents wanted.

"When 87 per cent of the people of Ontario are telling you, don't sell Hydro One, you put a pause on and throw all the work of the Legislative Assembly to the curb, to be started afresh, and you don't say anything about the sale of Hydro One?" Gélinas said. "You missed the boat."

She's also concerned that these are stop gap measures, with no assurances the relief will stay in place. For example, taxing people's hydro bills is something that should be stopped, rather than just giving out rebates.

"This won't start for another four months and we don't know how long it's going to last for,” she said. “That's not what people are asking for. They're telling us that electricity is a common good, and it should not be taxed.

"It's focused on short-term relief. It's like they're saying, OK, you've yelled loud enough, we'll give you a little something. But it's not something that will fundamentally change our hydro bills. Our hydro bills will continue to go up."

"These are not in-depth changes, these are little giveaways to appease 87 per cent of the people."

But Thibeault said the HST rebates are not intended to be temporary.

"This is ongoing," he said. "For me, making sure that we help families with their everyday cost of living is key. Today, this eight per cent reduction on the provincial side of the HST will do just that for many of them."

Throne Speech Fails to Provide Meaningful Action: Fedeli

- **baytoday.ca**
- **Mon Sep 12 2016**
- Permalink

The Wynne government has squandered an opportunity to provide Ontarians with relief from skyrocketing hydro rates, Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli said today.

“The government’s commitment to remove the provincial portion of the HST on hydro bills is simply too little, too late,” said Fedeli.

The Financial Accountability Officer recently indicated that Ontario's average household home energy costs have climbed by $295 annually from 2010 to 2014. In addition, since May 1st, 2015 households have faced a further increase of $254.96 on their bills.

“Since the Liberal government first took office, average households in Ontario are paying $1,000 more a year on their annual hydro bills. Today’s announcement does nothing to address the systemic issues that have caused hydro rates to skyrocket. It’s simply window dressing,” added Fedeli.

“If Premier Wynne is serious about tackling the province’s energy crisis, the Liberal government would immediately halt any further sales of Hydro One shares, and stop signing contracts for energy we don’t need.”

“Today's Throne Speech was a clear sign the Kathleen Wynne Liberals are a government that's tired, self-interested, and desperate. The government can try to reset the narrative but it's simply too late for that,” concluded Fedeli.

THE SUN TIMES

Hydro big in throne speech; United Way head says measures outlined show province admits burden of high rural bills

- **Owen Sound Sun Times**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**

- **Page:** A1 / Front
- **Section:** Local News
- **Byline:** Rob Gowan

Moves by the **Ontario** Liberals to reduce hydro costs to users is an indication the government is finally recognizing the burden rising electricity rates are putting on many Grey-Bruce residents, says one of those who have been advocating for cost reductions.

But local MPPs are saying taxpayers will still be on the hook for the money that the government has said it will rebate users.

In Monday's throne speech -delivered in the legislature by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell - the Liberals announced that the government would provide a rebate equal to the eight per cent **provincial** portion of the HST on hydro bills. Rural ratepayers will receive an additional $540 each year through the rural support program.

"What it has really said is they recognize the burden rural has been dealing with around electricity costs," said Francesca Dobbyn, executive director of the United Way of Bruce Grey. "We are absolutely thrilled to see that that recognition is there."

Eliminating the eight per cent **provincial** portion of the HST on hydro bills will save the average household about $130 a year. Small businesses will also receive the rebate that will go into effect on Jan. 1. The additional $540 for rural ratepayers is a move that will cost the **province** about $1 billion a year. The savings works out to about $45

a month.

There are also more savings for industrial customers through expanding eligibility for the Industrial Conservation Initiative.

Dobbyn, who has been an outspoken critic of rising hydro costs and how they are affecting low-income and rural users, said Monday that she was pleased with the decision to rebate the equivalent of the **provincial** portion of the HST.

"It is across the board, it is not means tested, everyone gets eight per cent," said Dobbyn.

As for the additional savings for rural users, Dobbyn said she still wants to see more details, but it appears that with the announcement the government will be closing the gap between what urban and rural users pay for the delivery of their hydro.

"One of the things we have said is let's go to an equalized distribution, where the cost of distribution is borne equally by everybody," said Dobbyn. "That is one of the things we had suggested as a solve was a reconfigure, and this is a way of reconfiguring it."

But Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MPP Bill Walker said the move by the government was “just a little bit more Groundhog Day.”

“Yet again they are going to come back and give you a rebate, but what they are not telling you is how much your hydro rate is going to increase over the next couple years,” said Walker. “They are just trying to curry favour with your own money again. Enough is enough.”

Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson said there are other steps the government should be taking in regard to electricity in **Ontario**.

“If they were truly serious about addressing the electricity crisis we currently have in **Ontario**, they would halt any further sales of Hydro One shares, and for goodness sake, they would stop signing expensive contracts for energy we don’t need.”

Thompson said the money that is being rebated has to come from somewhere.

“It is not going to come through their budget, because they have said they are going to strive very hard and they are going to balance it, so they are going to pull out all the stops and play shell games,” said Thompson. “That HST that they talked about in the throne speech is ultimately going to come out of our pockets one way or the other.”

In the speech, which is outlining the Liberal government’s priorities leading up to the next election, expected to happen in spring 2018, the government also vowed to fund an additional 100,000 day-care spaces over the next five years, on top of the 56,000 new daycare spaces in the past three years.

Education was also highlighted in the speech, with the government vowing to implement a renewed math strategy. The move, which includes having up to three math lead teachers in each elementary school, comes after recent Education Quality and Accountability Office Grade 6 test scores where half of the students failed to meet the **provincial** standard this year.

The speech also includes a pledge to continue with many programs, including the new **Ontario** Student Grant. The OSG will merge many existing programs, and remove a tax credit that benefits wealthier families the most, to offer essentially free tuition to low-income students and increase post-secondary support for all but the wealthiest families.

A promised $160 billion for infrastructure will help build or repave 5,000 kilometres of highways -almost half in the north -and 350 kilometres of new **rapid transit** in **city** centres. Plans to enact a cap-and-trade system in **Ontario** will go ahead as planned in early 2017.

The speech also focused on health care, calling for the addition of up to 350,000 home care nursing hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support, a pledge intended to increase support especially among 35-to 65-year-olds who are caught between kids and aging parents.

Thompson said a commitment by the Liberals to build or redevelop 18 hospitals in the **province** is good news, but she plans to continue to pressure the government to ensure the Kincardine hospital is one of them.

“The Kincardine community has been completely ignored since 2011, and (Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins) knows that they deserve to have the proper support to refurbish their local hospital,” said Thompson. “I will not be satisfied until I have confirmation that the Kincardine hospital is one of those 18 that were mentioned.”

Walker said he will continue to put pressure on the government to ensure the new hospital will finally be built in Markdale. The **province** gave the green light to the project in late 2014.

“I am a good soldier and I am giving them their due that they tell me everything is moving forward, I stay in contact with (Grey Bruce Health Services) who are also being led to believe everything is moving,” said Walker. “I tell you, we want to see some action and we want to see some shovels in the ground.”

- **Length:** 1014 words

Gov't pledges savings on **electricity**

- **The Chronicle Journal**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**
- **Section:** City News

Gov’t pledges savings on **electricity**

By Jeff Labine

THE CHRONICLE-JOURNAL

Ontario‘s Liberal government is promising to take the **provincial** portion of the HST off **hydro** bills for homes and small businesses.

The promise was made during the throne speech on Monday, which introduced a rebate for consumers of about eight per cent. For average households, this means an average savings of $130 a year.

The change, once passed, would come into effect Jan. 1, 2017.

The rural support program, which aims to help eligible rural customers with on-bill savings, is also expected to be boosted. The additional savings is expected to be 20 per cent, or $45 a month.

The throne speech was delivered after Premier Kathleen Wynne prorogued parliament last week following a defeat by the hands of the Progressive Conservatives in a byelection in southern **Ontario**.

Bill Mauro, Liberal MPP for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, said the rural support program has been an item he’s been pursuing for some time and was thrilled to see it included.

He said those living in low density areas, which he believes makes up most of the North, will be able to benefit from the program.

The eight per cent cut has already seen criticism, especially from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and many other organizations who believe the rebate won’t be enough to offset the increases to **hydro**.

Mauro said he had those questions as well, when he was briefed. He explained that the **energy** minister will be able to take another look at the announcements in the throne speech through the legislature later on.

“It’s a very fair question and one I asked myself,” he said.

“I was assured by the minister that this can be relooked at beginning Jan. 1, 2018. As a Northern member, it is a piece that I have been advocating for some time. This is not a starting point for us. We have had a number of programs in place for some time that have been providing relief to people. We have been listening. We have programs that are currently in place and have been in place for a number of years.”

Vic Fedeli, PC MPP for Nipissing, called the throne speech disappointing and the moves to reduce **energy** bills desperate. He didn't believe taking the **provincial** portion of the HST off **hydro** bills will be enough.

"That's a little too late for those, especially in the North, where we face significant **rate** increases and there's plenty more on the horizon," he said. "If you look at what the financial accountability officer said, he told us that since 2010, our **hydro** **rates** have climbed $295 every year. So this doesn't even cover half of the latest increase."

If the Progressive Conservatives took charge, Fedeli said their first acts would be to cancel the remainder of the sale of **Hydro** One and stop the purchasing of new **energy** contracts.

John Vanthof, NDP MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane, welcomed the eight per cent cut to **hydro** bills since it was his party that has been the ones most vocal about it.

"The Liberals are under a lot of pressure on the **electricity** file because I think they are finally waking up to the fact that a lot of people in this **province** are struggling because of the **electricity** bills are outstripping their capacity to pay them," he said.

"A good idea is a good idea and the NDP has lots of good ideas. If the Liberals want to continue stealing them, maybe we can make a dent in people's **electricity** bills. The sad part is the government of the day didn't realize how big of an issue this was until their own future was threatened. They lost the election in Scarborough. I question the changes they are making to **hydro** - and we agree with some of them - are for the people of **Ontario** or for their own future."

Vanthof was also supportive of the rural support program if low density areas would be able to apply.

While a lot of attention was on **energy**, the Liberals also promised that over the next five years that around 5,000 kilometres of highways will be built or repaved and 750 bridges will be built, repaired or rebuilt. About 2,400 kilometres of the highways and 200 of the bridges mentioned are expected to be in Northern **Ontario**.

Mauro added the **province** will continue to invest in infrastructure, including mass transit, which impacts Bombardier.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives began the fall sitting on a high note with the swearing-in ceremony Monday of their newest member, byelection winner Raymond Cho. The only PC member of the legislature from Toronto took his seat for the first time after the throne speech.

Other initiatives in the speech included a plan to create an additional 100,000 licensed child care spaces for kids aged four and under over five years, starting in 2017.

"We're setting aside between $600 to $750 million in terms of operating costs, and $1 to $3 billion in capital funds to make sure we deliver on our promise," said Indira Naidoo-Harris, the associate minister of education.

The throne speech was triggered by Wynne's surprise move last week to prorogue the legislature, saying the government wanted to reset its priorities halfway through its mandate - with the next election less than two years away.

Wynne, who was not available to the media Monday, had indicated the government would use the throne speech to offer some way to mitigate **hydro** costs for consumers.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the **electricity** portion of **hydro** bills for homes and small businesses rose 70 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

The NDP and Tories repeated their demands Monday that the Liberals stop selling any more shares in **Hydro** One - **Ontario**'s largest **electricity** transmission utility - warning further privatization will put even more upward pressure on **electricity** **rates**.

The Liberals say **rates** increased because **Ontario** stopped burning coal to generate **electricity** and because they invested heavily in transmission grid upgrades after years of neglect. They point out it's the **energy** board that sets **rates**, not **Hydro** One.

The throne speech also repeated the Liberals' plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system in January, which the government predicts will add about $5 a month to home heating bills and about four-cents-a-litre to the price of gasoline.

- With files from The Canadian Press

- **Length:** 1037 words

Grits plug hydro savings; Area opposition MPPs say throne speech HST rebate vow is really about saving the Wynne government

- **London Free Press**
- **Tue Sep 13 2016**

- **Page:** A1 / Front
- **Section:** News
- **Byline:** Jonathan Sher
- **Source:** The London Free Press And The Canadian Press

Like wind turbines whose spinning provokes outrage in Southwest **Ontario**, the province ’ s Liberals have spun hydro rates again, promising to scrap the HST just months after it swept aside abigger benefit.

Starting in January, Ontarians will get an eight per cent rebate for the provincial share of the harmonized sales tax, while rural residents get even bigger reductions, the Liberals announced in Monday ’ s throne speech opening the fall session of the legislature.

But opposition MPPs in London say Kathleen Wynne ’ s government is concerned only about staying in power after losing a Grit stronghold Sept. 1 in the Scarborough-Rouge River byeletion.

” This is an elaborate PR exercise ,” London West New Democrat MPP Peggy Sattler said.

Just nine months ago, **Ontario** scrapped its so-called Clean Energy Benefit that cut electricity bills by 10 per cent. That program saved ratepayers about $130 ayear, about the same as cutting eight percentage points off the HST.

The musical chairs-approach does nothingto restrain the cost of electricity, said Progressive Conservative MPP Jeff Yurek, who blames high provincial subsidies for wind and solar power.

” If they were really serious about energy rates, they ’ d stop signing new contracts for energy we don ’ t need ,” the Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP said.

Taxpayers will have to make up the $1 billion in **revenue** lost from the rebate, and Yurek said he suspects the tab will be added to debt.

His concerns are shared by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, which accused the Wynne Liberals of trying to bribe Ontarians with their own money.

” Our electricity bills grow at an average of eight per cent a year, so if we have a reduction of eight per cent in 2017, what ’ s goingto happen in the next year when they don ’ t have an HST to cut ?” said Christine Van Geyn, spokesperson for the federation in **Ontario**.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault defendedthe change, saying, ” It ’ s important to recognize that we ’ re doing somethingfor our remote, rural and northern customers as well .” The government projects additional savings of about $540 a year for rural electricity customers.

The need for help in cities is apparent, too; the number of Londoners who have fallen behind paying electricity bills has grown from 11,077 in 2013 to 12,406 last year. Higher customer arrears also were found in St. Thomas, Woodstock, Sarnia and Chatham-Kent.

NDP Leader AndreaHorwath said it was the Liberals who put the HST on electricity bills in thefirstplace.

” Six years later the premier says she ’ ll rebate the HST, but people have to wait four more months ,” Horwath said. ” That raises a lot of questions about how long this rebate ’ s going to last and how it will work .” The government said it has no end date yet for the HST cut.

PC Leader Patrick Brown said Wynne ignored years of complaints about rising electricity rates until the Liberals lost the recent byelection. ” The problems of everyday Ontarians are never a problem until it ’ s Premier Wynne ’ s problem .” Other initiatives in the throne speech include a plan to create an additional 100,000 licensed child -care spaces for kids four and under over five years, starting in 2017.

” We ’ re setting aside between $600 (million) to $750 million in terms of operating costs, and $1 (billion) to $3 billion in capital funds to make sure we deliver on our promise ,” said Indira Naidoo-Harris, the associate education minister.

The throne speech was triggered by Wynne ’ s move last week to prorogue the legislature, saying the gov-ernment wanted to reset priorities midway through its mandate - the next election less than two years away.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the electricity portion of hydro bills for homes and small businesses rose 70 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

The NDP and Tories repeatedtheir demands Monday that the Liberals stop selling more shares in **Ontario** ’ s largest electricity transmission utility - Hydro One - warning further privatization will force electricity rates higher.

The Liberals say rates rosebecause **Ontario** stopped burning coal to generate electricity and invested heavily in transmission grid upgrades after years of neglect. They point out that the **Ontario** Energy Board sets rates, not Hydro One.

The throne speech also repeated the Liberals ’ plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system in January, which the government predicts will add about $5 a month to home heating bills and about four cents a litre to the price ofgasoline.

- **Length:** 730 words

Opposition leaders take aim at Liberal plan to rebate HST on soaring hydro bills

- **Beach Mirror**
- **Mon Sep 12 2016**
- **Section:** News
- **Byline:** David Nickle
- Permalink

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's proposed plan to rebate **Hydro** One customers the equivalent of the **Ontario** portion of the HST - about eight per cent - drew fire from opposition leaders.

Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown said that it might as well have been called "the Raymond Cho **Hydro** Benefit," in reference to former City Councillor Raymond Cho's victory two weeks ago in the Scarborough Rouge River byelection.

And New Democratic Party leader Andrea Horwath noted that the rebate was similar to her party's 2010 proposal to simply take the HST off **hydro** purchases.

The Wynne proposal, articulated in the September 12 throne speech, merely rebates the amount - about eight per cent.

"Just take the HST off **hydro** already," said Horwath, in a news conference offering her party's response to the throne speech. "Once and for all. Just do it. Get over it. When seniors open their next **hydro** bill they should see an eight per cent cut."

Horwath wouldn't take credit for the policy change.

"I'm happy for the families of **Ontario** if they can get a break on the **hydro** bill," she said.

But Patrick Brown was a different story. He said that Cho's victory in Scarborough Rouge River, which has been a stronghold for Liberals for more than two decades, was likely the prime motivation for Wynne's policy shift.

"The **Ontario** PCs have called on the Liberal government to take the HST off the **hydro** bills for years," he said. "Now this Liberal government wants to take credit for it after families and businesses have spoken out. We should be calling it the Raymond Cho **hydro** benefit. If it wasn't for his victory two weeks ago this government would still be ignoring the problem."

Brown was also skeptical at projections in the throne speech indicating that the **provincial** budget would be balanced in 2017/2018.

And he noted that the speech made no mention of additional funding or resources for parents of children with autism.

- **Length:** 326 words

globeandmail.com

Ontario Liberals pledges 8-per-cent tax cut on electricity bills; Consumer will save province's portion of HST - 8 per cent - on their bill, starting Jan. 2017, Wynne government announces

theglobeandmail.com
Mon Sep 12 2016, 12:06pm ET
Section: National
Byline: ADRIAN MORROW

The Ontario Liberals are bringing in a new 8-per-cent subsidy for residential **electricity** bills - less than a year after ending a 10-per-cent subsidy - in a bid to cool voter anger over one of the province's most persistent pocketbook issues.

The move, which will cost the treasury an estimated $1-billion annually, marks an abrupt pivot toward everyday concerns for Premier Kathleen Wynne as she begins planning a long arc toward her re-election campaign in 20 months' time.

The subsidy is equal to the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax**, and the government is branding it as an **HST** **rebate**. The reduction will automatically be taken off consumers' bills, with a line reminding them of the discount.

It is almost identical to the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit, a 10-per-cent **rebate** the Liberals started in 2011 to ease the higher cost of green **electricity** contracts, and which expired at the start of this year. That benefit was criticized for disproportionately rewarding rich people who consume a lot of **electricity**, and for discouraging conservation by subsidizing **energy** use with **tax** dollars and debt.

The government's scramble to revive the policy under different branding signals just how badly the Liberals want to reverse their flagging poll numbers. So eager were the Liberals to highlight some good news that Ms. Wynne called in Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell to prorogue the legislature and read a Speech from the Throne on Monday.

"You continue to face **electricity**-cost increases above the level of inflation," Ms. Dowdeswell said in the noon address, as hundreds of corporate and union leaders packed the public galleries and the floor of the legislature. "Whether in Kenora, Sudbury, Belleville, London or Barrie, your government has listened to and has heard your concerns. It recognizes that the cost of **electricity** is now stretching family budgets."

The speech also pledged to create 100,000 more child-care spaces over five years, at a cost of up to $3.75-billion; to create new training programs for workers; to improve home care; and to cut waiting times for patients to see specialists. The pledges appear to be a bid to win back disaffected voters by framing the government's agenda in day-to-day terms.

The **hydro** subsidy will kick in Jan. 1, 2017. It will apply to houses, farms and small businesses. The government estimates the discount would save a typical household $130 a year.

Rural residents will also receive an additional discount of roughly 20 per cent, while industrial businesses will get more incentives to shift their **electricity** use to off-peak times, such as late at night, to save money. The increased savings for rural residents will be subsidized by other **hydro** ratepayers, who will have to pay extra to cover an annual cost of $285-million.

A combination of factors - including long-term contracts that guarantee a single rate of return to private power producers, the cost of repairing aging infrastructure such as nuclear reactors and transmission lines, and falling demand - have driven up rates in recent years. Not only is the expensive power an irritant for voters, it also deters businesses when they consider setting up shop in Ontario.

Hydro rates have proven a potent issue for the opposition parties, which hammered the government over prices in the Sept. 1 Scarborough-Rouge River by-election. A Liberal seat since 1999, it fell to the Progressive Conservatives.

"It's clear that the problems of everyday Ontarians are never a problem until it's Premier Wynne's problem," Tory Leader Patrick Brown said. "This is merely a Band-Aid solution."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath pointed out that the program will not actually remove the provincial portion of **HST** from bills, but only **rebate** it, meaning the Liberals could cancel the program at any time.

"That raises a lot of questions about how long this **rebate** is going to last," she said. "My message is: Just take the **HST** off **hydro** already, once and for all."

A government source said taking the provincial portion of the **HST** off would involve lengthy negotiations with the federal government, so the Liberals decided instead to structure the move as a subsidy so they could roll it out faster.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault would not directly address any criticisms of the subsidy. Asked why he thought it was a good idea to have Ontarians effectively subsidize their own **hydro** rates with their **tax** dollars, he told reporters: "What we're doing today is we're investing in families, investing in Ontario businesses."

Follow this link to view this story on globeandmail.com: (www.theglobeandmail.com»)

Length: 747 words

Premier Wynne's "reset" an epic fail for the people of Ontario
Marketwired
Mon Sep 12 2016, 4:20am ET

TORONTO, ONTARIO--(Marketwired - Sept. 12, 2016) - Rather than fixing their misguided plan to privatize Ontario's **electricity** system the government has opted to throw good money after bad, said Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario.

"Today's Throne Speech was little more than a rehash of their previous budget speech and shows how clearly disconnected the Premier is from what is actually going on for people in the real world outside the bubble of Queen's Park," said Hahn. "People are struggling and removing the provincial portion of the **HST** off **hydro** bills is not going to change that. In fact, it just redirects more public money into the pockets of the same corporate share holders that have already made $60 million off of the initial sale of shares in our **hydro** system."

"The fact that the government continues to steam roll ahead with their plan to further privatize **hydro** means today's announcement is nothing more than an attempt at a short-term buy off with serious long-term consequences," said Hahn. "There is no question the people of Ontario need help but taking even more money away from funding the public services we all need is simply wrong. Instead of the change in direction we need, the Premier has doubled down on bad policy and is further undermining the public services that are supposed to make life fairer for the rest of us."

"If our Premier was serious about fixing her governments direction she would have provided a clear sign that she is on the side of the people and not her big corporate donors. She would immediately stop any further sale of **Hydro** One," said Hahn. "What the people of this province need from their government is a complete change of course. For over two decades our governments have been bowing to the corporate agenda, continually cutting corporate taxes and opening our public services to private profit. People are sick of the odds being stacked against them and with today's Throne Speech the Premier has chosen to ignore them."

CUPE is Ontario's community union, with more than 260,000 members providing quality public services we all rely on, in every part of the province, every day. CUPE Ontario members are proud to work in social services, health care, municipalities, school boards, universities and airlines.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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 Length: 400 words

Oshawa This Week

Oshawa MPP Jennifer French sheds the light on hydro bills in anticipation of Liberal throne speech

Oshawa This Week
Mon Sep 12 2016
Section: Durham
Byline: Reka Szekely

OSHAWA -- After vowing to share residents' **hydro** bills with the premier and **energy** minister, Oshawa MPP Jennifer French has no shortage of frustrated residents willing to share and is in fact getting **hydro** bills from across Durham.

Oshawa resident Jeff Goodall was one of the residents dropping off his bill at the NDP MPP's office on Friday, Sept. 9. He lives in a one-and-a-half-storey semi house with no air conditioning, just a couple of fans to beat the summer heat. His most recent **hydro** bill was $101.15, more than double the $42.07 he paid in the same period last year.

"I got my **hydro** bill online, I think it was yesterday, and I was utterly shocked," he said.

French pointed out that Ontario now has the highest **hydro** rates in North America, surpassing Hawaii. While residents like Goodall struggle to conserve, they're not seeing a difference in their bills.

"They're going to get their money from somewhere," she said of the Province's **electricity** system. "Conservation matters but conservation is not the solution when the system has been rigged to bring in what it needs to."

The Liberals are expected to address the issue of **hydro** rates in today's throne speech and French says she's getting bills from her fellow Durham MPPs' constituents.

"We are totally open to receiving these from across the region because I would bet my Liberal counterparts are not going to invite **hydro** bills," said French. "I think it's fair to say they're not going to welcome hard evidence of just how challenging it is to get by."

She said she recently received a letter from a woman about affordable housing, but it wasn't just housing costs crushing her. It was her other bills like cable and **hydro**.

"There's nowhere to cut costs, she can sit in the dark, she can sit in the cold, she can sit without food, but is that what we have to do to get by in the Province of Ontario?" said French.

Among the bills collected by French was a $151,000 **hydro** bill from the City of Oshawa dropped off by Mayor John Henry.

The June 2015 bill was for the City's 12,639 streetlights which used 66,000 kilo watt hours of **electricity**. The cost of power was listed as just $3,678.89, representing a fraction of the bill.

Meanwhile the global adjustment on the bill was a whopping $62,325.42. According to the Ontario **Energy** Board, the global adjustment "reflects the differences between the market price of **electricity** and the regulated or contract prices that are paid to generators for the **electricity** they produce".

Delivery charges added $59,663.31 to the bill while **HST** totalled $17,404.81, which means **tax** alone on the bill was more than four times the cost of power.

"I thought I wasn't understanding when he showed this to me," said French of the shocking bill.

Mayor Henry said that streetlight bill means the City is spending about $700,000 a year in global adjustment fees for streetlights alone. He has a similar bill on file for the Legends Centre where the community centre used $8,600 in power and paid a $48,000 global adjustment.

"It's one of these things that's just mind boggling," said the mayor.

He said the Region has asked the Independent **Electricity** System Operator to visit the Region and explain bills but it still doesn't make sense and supports French's efforts to shed more light on the issue.

"I've talked to her about this for a while," said the mayor. "I think what she's doing is a good idea to raise the issue."

While residents don't see the global adjustment on their bills, businesses do and French said she's hearing from them.

"By inviting the bills I'm realizing this is part of a far bigger story ... we're now getting it from businesses, we now have received it from a municipality and you start to see that the individual in their townhouse is only part of the picture and our streetlight bill in the City of Oshawa, those two things are connected," she said adding that at the end of the day residents pick up the bill as consumers and taxpayers.

Constituents can drop off or mail their bills to French's constituency office. It's located at 78 Centre St. N., Unit 2, Oshawa L1G 4B6.

Length: 701 words
Permalink: www.durhamregion.com...»

thestar.com

Wynne announces 8 per cent HST cut from hydro bills in throne speech

thestar.com
Mon Sep 12 2016
Section: News | Toronto Star
Byline: Robert Benzie(https://author.thestar.com/content/thestar/authors.benzie_rob.html)Rob Ferguson(https://author.thestar.com/content/thestar/authors.ferguson_rob.html)

Electricity ratepayers will no longer be charged the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** on their **hydro** bills, Premier Kathleen Wynne's government has announced.

In a bid to jolt their flagging popularity((www.thestar.com»)), Wynne's Liberals delivered a consumer-friendly speech from the throne Monday that also promised 100,000 new child-care spaces over the next five years.

"Whether in Kenora, Sudbury, Belleville, London, or Barrie, your government has listened to and has heard your concerns," said the speech, which was read in the Legislature by Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

"It recognizes that the cost of **electricity** is now stretching family budgets," the speech continued.

Eliminating the 8-per-cent provincial share of the 13-per-cent **HST** as of Jan. 1 will save the average household $130 a year.

Many rural ratepayers, who cannot take advantage of the inexpensive natural gas for heating that urban Ontarians can, will receive an additional $540 annually.

While that **rebate** will cost the treasury about $1 billion a year, the Liberals insist they are on track to balance the books in the 2017-18 budget expected for March.

"Ontario's economy is still in transition, but our recovery is firmly track," Wynne((www.thestar.com»)) said in a statement.

"While many are benefitting from the growth we've achieved, others have yet to share in Ontario's resurgence," the premier said.

The Liberals, who will mark their 13th anniversary in power next month, are smarting from the loss((www.thestar.com»)) of the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection to the Progressive Conservatives on Sept. 1.

Mindful that Ontarians head to the polls in spring 2018, Wynne((www.thestar.com»)) is desperate to give her majority Grits a reboot.

"Our government understands the challenges people face and shares their concerns," she said, vowing to deliver "real benefits and more inclusive growth that will help more people in their everyday lives."

That "everyday" theme permeated nearly every one of the throne speech's 17 pages.

"With economic growth and a balanced budget, your government will continue to build Ontario up, investing in the things that matter most to you and that help in your everyday life," said the address, entitled "A Balanced Plan to Build Ontario Up for Everyone."

"It will do that, first, by enhancing child care."

Building upon the 56,000 new daycare spaces in the past three years, the Liberals will fund an additional 100,000 over the next five.

"Your government will also make it easier for parents to find and use the services their children need, whether they are before-and-after school programs, drop-in centres or more licensed child care spaces."

When the government announced it would ban day care wait list fees that range from $20 to $200 as of Sept. 1, child-care activists said Wynne needed to create more spaces so new parents wouldn't face a mad scramble to find spots for their kids.

Competition for spaces is tight, particularly in Toronto, where there are spots for just 21 per cent of children under the age of 5. Ontario now spends more than $1 billion a year on 350,000 licensed day care spaces.

Stinging over the recent Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests that found half of Ontario's Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial mathematics standard this year, the government plans to emphasize math skills.

"To help students improve their mathematics skills, your government is implementing a renewed math strategy, including having up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools."

The falling EQAO scores - 58 per cent of Grade Six students met the standard in 2012 - has been blamed on kids' anxiety over math and teachers' lack of proficiency in the subject.

Beyond math, the government is "also setting a goal for every young person to have at least one opportunity for experiential learning."

Pocketbook issues such as **hydro** and daycare dominated the speech.

The Liberals remain committed to selling the **Hydro** One transmission utility to bankroll public transit and roads and bridges.

The government's carbon-pricing scheme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, which will cost the average household $13 extra a month starting in January, is still on track.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown, who attended Tory MPP Raymond Cho's swearing-in earlier Monday, and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath will offer their critiques of the government's plan later in the afternoon.

Both have been urging the Liberals to tackle soaring **hydro** prices; Horwath((www.thestar.com»)) has been pushing for the scrapping of the **HST** from bills since 2010.

Ontario Public Service Employees' Union president Warren (Smokey) Thomas didn't wait to hear the speech to blast it; he said in a news release that Wynne's government needs "the boot, not a reboot."

"After two years of lurching from mistake to mistake, the Liberals don't need to 'refresh their brand.' They need to call an election," said Thomas.

"Kathleen Wynne's sudden interest in the needs of everyday Ontarians is all about her political survival, nothing more."

All government legislation on the order paper when the House was prorogued Thursday will be reintroduced, starting on Tuesday.

The first bill will be the campaign finance reform law sparked by a Toronto Star series last March.

Under the legislation, corporate and union donations to political parties will be banned, MPPs and candidates will be forbidden from attending party fundraisers, and contribution limits will be reduced to $1,200 from $9,975.

The new law will introduce public subsidies of the major political parties by giving them $2.71 for every vote they received in the 2014 election.

Starting in January, annual payments will be $5.06 million for the Liberals, $4.09 million for the Conservatives, $3.1 million for the New Democrats, and $630,000 for the Greens.

Length: 950 words

TORONTO STAR

What will Wynne do about hydro prices?; Relief coming from soaring hydro bills, Wynne says, Sept. 8

Toronto Star
Mon Sep 12 2016
Page: A10
Section: Editorial

Relief coming from soaring hydro bills, Wynne says, Sept. 8

I'm anxiously awaiting the premier's solution for families having trouble paying high **electricity** bills. My guess? She'll suggest they move to Manitoba or Quebec. Ontario has the highest **electricity** rates of any province and is the only one where rates are rising rapidly.

Applying a typical time-of-use mix, the average rate for **electricity** generation is 11.1 cents/kWh. The all-in rate, which also includes charges for delivery, regulation and the **HST**, is much higher. For a Toronto **Hydro** customer, consuming 750 kWh per month (Ontario average), the all-in rate is 21.5 cents per kWh.

For a **Hydro** One customer in rural Ontario, the situation is even worse, at 27.6 cents. So, Toronto residents who relocate to Winnipeg will pay all-in rate of 10.4 cents, a saving of 52 per cent.

Rural Ontarians can do even better by moving to Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha!, Que. They pay only 8.5 cents, and save 69 per cent.

Last one out, turn off the lights.

Gary Mooney, Prince Edward County, Ont.

As a ratepayer, I am incensed at Premier Kathleen Wynne's suggestion of relief of "soaring **hydro** bills due to the summer heat wave." This statement shows a blatant disrespect for citizens and ratepayers by assuming that they are stupid enough to believe that their soaring **electricity** cost is to be blamed upon the unpredictable weather and not the mismanagement of the governance of Ontario, which has been ongoing for over a decade. Indeed it has continued to decline under her direct care as premier.

Wynne needs to take accountability for her actions and those of her party and to stop insulting us by diverting our attention away from her government and toward fictitious culprits while trying to appear as the hero while offering relief to a problem which she has herself created. At least we can drown our misery in over-taxed alcohol purchased from the local grocery store while this snake-oil saleswoman completes her term in office. The best relief she could offer us would be to completely resign from government.

Tom Whent, Sault Ste. Marie

 Length: 342 words

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Ontario set to reveal electricity bill cuts; While Wynne wagers a pivot could reverse her sliding poll numbers, there is little the Liberals can do before the next provincial vote

The Globe and Mail
Mon Sep 12 2016
Page: A3
Section: News
Byline: ADRIAN MORROW

Ontario's ruling Liberals are expected to unveil promised cuts to **electricity** bills in Monday's Throne Speech, tackling the province's most intractable pocketbook irritant.

Premier Kathleen Wynne is calculating that such a pivot toward bread-and-butter concerns is necessary to reverse poor poll numbers and plot a course to re-election.

But with many of the costs of the province's **electricity** system tied up in lengthy contracts and long-term infrastructure investments, there is little the government can do on the structural side to lower bills in the 20 months before the next election.

The alternative is a straight subsidy to **hydro** consumers. The Liberals have hinted at one possible way to do this: The province's climate-change plan last spring pledged to divert proceeds from the coming cap-and-trade system to lower bills. Other options include removing the **HST** from **electricity** bills or using **tax** dollars to subsidize bills.

However they make it happen, the Liberals are certain to face criticism that a subsidy is an inefficient Band-Aid solution diverting funds from other needs.

That may not much matter to the Liberals, who got an earful from voters in ScarboroughRouge River - a long-time Grit fiefdom that fell to the Tories in a by-election earlier this month - as they campaigned amid a sticky summer when the non-stop need for air conditioning pushed bills skyward.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa talked up the coming **hydro** relief Friday, even as he defended high **electricity** prices as simply the cost of building a reliable system.

"Yeah, I am excited," he said.

"We understand that we need to improve and mitigate those costs for everyday Ontarians, so they can have greater affordability. But at the same time, we needed to make those investments to provide for that integrity." The Liberals have piled costs onto the province's **electricity** system over the past 13 years. Some are in the form of upgraded infrastructure; others are lengthy contracts with private gas, wind and solar generators to provide **electricity** at fixed prices to replace the province's shuttered coal plants; some are the price of running the province's nuclear reactors, which provide the lion's share of Ontario's power.

It hasn't helped that some of the government's more unpopular decisions have been tied to the power grid: Cancelling two gasfired power plants in the Toronto suburbs added an estimated $1.1billion in costs to be borne by **hydro** consumers. And the opposition parties charge that Ms. Wynne's privatization of **Hydro** One will lead to higher prices because private interests will be more aggressive than the government in seeking higher prices from consumers.

Another problem, ironically, is a drop in demand: With consumers using less **electricity** than in years past, the costs of the system are spread over less demand, making actual rates increase.

Electricity expert Adam White said the overall cost of the system is largely fixed, limiting the range of options for the Liberals to cut bills in the short term.

"Most of the cost increase in the total cost of the system are fixed costs, are baked in," said Mr. White, CEO of Powerconsumer Inc., an analytics company that helps businesses become more **energy**-efficient.

The best option, he contends, is for the government to push consumers to use more **electricity** in off-peak hours - largely at night, when the province produces vast quantities of **electricity** that go unused - and boost consumption overall to push down rates.

"If you could boost consumption in the off-peak and put some of the fixed costs onto that consumption, it would drive down bills," he said.

Such structural solutions, however, may not sate the Liberals' appetite for a short-term fix to get them through to the election.

But the options for a straight subsidy all come with problems.

Giving Ontarians a **rebate** using money from the treasury - as the Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit did from 2011 to 2015 - would cost roughly $1-billion annually for a 10-per-cent subsidy, Mr. White said, piling on even more debt at a time the province is trying to balance the books and tackle its $300-billion provincial debt.

Taking the **HST** off bills, meanwhile, would have a similar effect, depriving the government of much-needed revenue.

And using cap-and-trade cash to pay for subsidies would take that money away from other measures to fight greenhouse gases.

The government has suggested strongly it is interested in the latter route. One section of the Climate Change Action Plan promises to "use cap-and-trade proceeds to offset the cost of greenhouse gas pollution reduction initiatives that are currently funded by residential and industrial consumers through their bills."

The government could spin such a move as a way to encourage people to use more **electricity** - such as by driving **electric** cars or switching to **electric** heat - in lieu of burning fossil fuels.

But Keith Brooks of Environmental Defence said the money would be better spent on more targeted incentives for such things, rather than simply subsidizing **electricity** bills.

"I don't think it's good policy," he said. "If you want people to drive [**electric** vehicles], subsidize that directly, which the government is doing. If you want people to use **electric** heat, create a program for that."

Ultimately, such policy considerations might take a back seat to political ones.

Both opposition parties have been hammering the Liberals on **hydro** prices.

And on Friday, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath signalled that her focus for the coming session will be blasting the Grits on bread-and-butter problems for Ontarians. She said she would push the Liberals to adopt a $15 minimum wage, stop squeezing the province's health-care budget, make it easier to join a union and take **HST** off **hydro** bills.

"Costs are up, wages are flat and good opportunities are few and far between in this province," she said. "We have to lower **hydro** bills. There were seniors and families who couldn't turn on the air conditioner this week when we felt like it was 40 degrees out there."

Length: 982 words

Kathleen Wynne announces 8 per cent tax cut from hydro bills in throne speech

thestar.com
Mon Sep 12 2016
Section: News | Toronto Star
Byline: Robert Benzie(https://author.thestar.com/content/thestar/authors.benzie_rob.html)Rob Ferguson(https://author.thestar.com/content/thestar/authors.ferguson_rob.html)

Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals will spend $1 billion annually to give **electricity** ratepayers an 8-per-cent **tax** cut on their **hydro** bills starting in January.

In a bid to jolt their flagging popularity with a provincial election less than two years away((www.thestar.com»)), Wynne's Liberals delivered a consumer-friendly speech from the throne Monday that also promised 100,000 new child-care spaces over the next five years.

"Your government has listened and has heard your concerns," said the speech read in the legislature by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

"It recognizes that the cost of **electricity** is now stretching family budgets."

Eliminating the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the 13-per-cent harmonized sales **tax** on **hydro** bills for homes, small businesses, and farms should save the average household $130 a year.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said it's "a bit rich" that the Liberals, who ignored opposition calls to exempt **hydro** from the **HST**, are now promising a **tax** break that is "too little, too late."

"We should be calling it the Raymond Cho **hydro** benefit," Brown crowed, charging that the Liberals concocted the plan only after losing their stronghold of Scarborough-Rouge River to the Tories' Cho((www.thestar.com»)) in the Sept. 1 byelection.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa, insisting that wasn't the case, maintained the government will still balance the budget next year because of higher **tax** revenues from growth in the economy.

"This is not something that just happened a week ago. We've been planning this for a number of months and we've been taking the necessary steps to accommodate this," Sousa told reporters.

"The driving force behind this is the needs of the people of Ontario, not the needs of any political party."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath urged the government to quickly pass legislation making the **rebate** available immediately with hefty summer air-conditioning bills rolling in.

"People are going to wait for four more months. Just do it."

Even some Liberals are privately expressing doubts. Sources told the Star that Grit MPPs gave the premier an earful behind closed doors earlier Monday in a caucus meeting.

"There are concerns for sure that we are not doing enough," one insider confided.

Other critics noted that the average household will be paying an extra $13 a month((www.thestar.com»)) for gasoline and natural gas next year when the government's new carbon-pricing plan is slated to take effect, offsetting any **hydro** savings.

"With this government, they give you a little bit from one pocket but take it out of your other pocket," said Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Many rural ratepayers, who cannot take advantage of the inexpensive natural gas for heating that urban Ontarians enjoy and pay higher distribution fees, will receive an additional $540 annually off their **electricity** bills.

About 1,000 factories will be able to take advantage of the government's industrial conservation initiative, which now rewards 300 companies with lower **hydro** prices if they shift power use away from peak usage times.

"Our government understands the challenges people face and shares their concerns," the government said in the 17-page speech, vowing to "help more people in their everyday lives."

Building upon the 56,000 new daycare spaces in the past three years, the Liberals will fund an additional 100,000 over the next five, starting in January.

Associate education minister Indira Naidoo-Harris said the additional spots will cost between $600 million and $750 million in operating expenses with a capital investments ranging from $1 billion to $3 billion over five years.

That means as much as $3.75 billion more for child care from 2017 to 2021.

Competition for spaces is tight, particularly in Toronto, where there are spots for just 21 per cent of children under the age of 5. Ontario already spends more than $1 billion a year on 350,000 licensed daycare spaces.

Stinging over the recent Education Quality and Accountability Office tests that found half of Ontario's Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial mathematics standard this year, the government plans to emphasize math skills.

"To help students improve their mathematics skills, your government is implementing a renewed math strategy, including having up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools."

The falling scores - 58 per cent of Grade Six students met the standard in 2012 - has been blamed on kids' anxiety over math and teachers' lack of proficiency in the subject.

Beyond math, the government is "also setting a goal for every young person to have at least one opportunity for experiential learning."

Pocketbook issues such as **hydro** and daycare dominated the speech.

The Liberals remain committed to selling the **Hydro** One transmission utility to bankroll public transit and roads and bridges.

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Length: 927 words

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Liberals promise to remove Ontario portion of HST from hydro bills; Ontario removes part of HST from hydro bills

Canadian Press
Mon Sep 12 2016
Section: Ontario,Business
Byline: Keith Leslie

TORONTO - It will cost Ontario taxpayers $1 billion a year to subsidize **electricity** ratepayers under a Liberal government initiative to remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** from **hydro** bills.

The Liberals announced the plan in Monday's throne speech opening the fall session of the legislature, saying Ontario's eight-per-cent slice of the **HST** would be taken off **electricity** bills starting in January, and promising additional relief for rural ratepayers.

"I think it's important to recognize that we're doing something for our remote, rural and northern (**electricity**) customers as well," said **Energy** Minister Glenn Thibeault. "They're going to be saving about 20 per cent on all of their bills."

The government said the **HST** reduction will save the typical Ontario household about $130 a year, and projected additional savings of about $540 a year for some rural **electricity** customers.

It was just nine months ago that Ontario scrapped the Clean **Energy** Benefit, which provided a 10-per-cent reduction on all parts of **electricity** bills, including the **HST**. That program also saved ratepayers just over $130 a year and cost about $1 billion.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said Premier Kathleen Wynne was basically trying to bribe Ontarians with their own money and called it a "cynical" move.

"Our **electricity** bills grow at an average of eight per cent a year, so if we have a reduction of eight per cent in 2017, what's going to happen in the next year when they don't have an **HST** to cut," asked CTF Ontario spokeswoman Christine Van Geyn.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said it was the Liberals who put the **HST** on **electricity** bills in the first place, and she wonders how long their **rebate** plan will stay in place.

"Six years later the premier says she'll **rebate** the **HST**, but people have to wait four more months," said Horwath. "That raises a lot of questions about how long this **rebate**'s going to last and how it will work."

Other initiatives in the throne speech include a commitment to create an additional 100,000 licensed child care spaces for kids aged four and under over five years, starting in 2017.

"We're investing in our child care and we're doing it by setting aside between $600 to $750 million in terms of operating costs, and setting aside $1-to-$3 billion in capital funds to make sure we deliver on our promise," said Indira Naidoo-Harris, the associate minister of education.

The government also promised to put a new emphasis on math skills after half of all Grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial math standard this year, continuing a steady decline in test scores over the past five years.

The throne speech was triggered by Wynne's surprise move last week to prorogue the legislature, saying the government wanted to reset its priorities halfway through its mandate - with the next election less than two years away.

Wynne had indicated the government would offer some way to mitigate **hydro** costs for consumers after the Liberals lost a long-held Toronto riding to the Tories in a Sept. 1 byelection.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has said the **electricity** portion of **hydro** bills for homes and small businesses rose 70 per cent between 2006 and 2014.

The opposition parties have been on the attack over rising **electricity** bills, demanding the Liberals stop selling any more shares in **Hydro** One, the province's transmission utility.

The Liberals say **hydro** rates increased because Ontario stopped burning coal to generate **electricity** and because they invested heavily in transmission grid upgrades after years of neglect.

The Progressive Conservatives say rates were driven up higher than necessary by the Liberals' generous, long-term contracts for wind and solar power, while the Green party blames expensive nuclear refurbishments for adding to **hydro** bills.

The Tories began the sitting on a high note with the swearing-in Monday of their newest member, Raymond Cho, who took Scarborough-Rouge River from the Liberals, giving the Tories a much-sought after seat in Toronto.

The throne speech also repeats the Liberals' plan to introduce a cap-and-trade system in January, which the government predicts will add about $5 a month to home heating bills and about four-cents-a-litre to the price of gasoline.

"Cap-and-trade proceeds will be transparently invested in greenhouse gas reduction projects and incentives that will help Ontario households and businesses further reduce emissions," said an advance text of the speech to be read by Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

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Length: 723 words

NATIONAL POST

Ontario government to knock HST off electricity bills, increase child care spaces: Throne Speech

News - National Post
Mon Sep 12 2016
Section: Canadian Politics
Byline: Ashley Csanady

Promises to knock the provincial sales **tax** off **electricity** bills and create 100,000 new child care spaces anchored the Ontario government's throne speech delivered Monday - pocketbook pitches intended to life the governing Liberals fortunes.

But the opposition parties are saying it's "too little, too late" and won't address the "crisis" in rising power costs in the province or help lift the Liberals low polling numbers or boost Premier Kathleen Wynne's drooping personal popularity. They say the mid-mandate Throne Speech was less a legislative refresh and more an effort to distract voters after the Liberals byelection loss to the Tories over the summer in Scarborough.

As MPPs and dignitaries gathered under a recently renovated ceiling in Queen's Park's legislative chamber, Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell read her first speech from the throne, which also included promises to improve the elementary math curriculum and more home and nursing care.

The speech was also more overtly political when compared to the party's post-election victory speech in 2014 - with the Liberals trying to appease voters increasingly angry over the price of **electricity**.

"I don't think the **HST** should have been put on the bills in the first place," said NDP leader Andrea Horwath, whose party has long called for the removal of **HST** from home **hydro**. She wonders why the Liberals are choosing to **rebate** the cost instead of permanently removing it from bills and if that means it's only a temporary move.

PC leader Patrick Brown said it was a "Band-Aid solution" and "too little, too late" after over a decade of Liberal **energy** policies have driven up costs.

"I think the best thing we can do... would be to change the failed policies," he said. "I'm not comfortable with any temporary solutions."

"There's a crisis in **energy**... I think this is a little bit of relief but it's not a long-term solution."

Both Brown and Horwath also noted that **electricity** rates are, in some parts of the province, rising by almost as much as removing the **HST** will knock off - so it won't affect many families bottom lines.

But **energy** costs are complex in Ontario, a mix of the high cost of building our nuclear plants, the length of transmission and yes, green **energy** policies. Both opposition parties were quick to say the Liberals had not done enough, but slow to say what could actually be done to lower rates in the short term.

Which is precisely why the Liberals targeted the eight per cent provincial portion of the **HST** - it's an immediate credit ratepayers will start seeing on bills in January, just as increased costs associated with a new cap-and-trade carbon pricing strategy kick in.

But that's not the only goodie the Liberals are promising:

With the books set to be balanced by the end of March 2018, the government is making a pitch to invest "in the things that matter most to you and that help you in your everyday life," including:

The pledge to remove the provincial portion of the **HST** - eight per cent - from all **electricity** bills, both residential and commercial. That should save the average consumer about $130 a year, the government estimates. Rural consumers, who face steep transmission charges, will be offered additional relief, which could save as much as $45 a month when combined with the **HST** savings. And industrial consumers will be offered even more programs to keep their **hydro** costs down, as many bemoan those rates as one of many factors pushing manufacturing jobs out of the province. The move will cost the government upwards of $1 billion a year in forgone revenue - almost exactly the same amount it saved by ending the previous Ontario Clean **Energy** Benefit, which saved consumers about 10 per cent on a month on their bills;

A promise to create 100,000 child care spaces over five years, starting in 2017, is ambitious - and extends beyond the government's current mandate. Importantly, this "will double the current capacity for the 0-4 age group," a government backgrounder notes, addressing concerns that demographic has suffered from fewer spaces since all-day kindergarten rolled out across the province. Newly minted associate minister of early years and child child Indira Naidoo-Harris said the province will spend around $2 billion on the plan, $600 to $750 million in operating costs (once fully implemented) and $1.3 billion on capital investments. She could not say how much of that money will go to lowering costs for parents, though her ministry said the goal is to use the annual funding "to support fee subsidies for qualified families."

Adding up to 350,000 home care nursing hours and 1.3 million hours of personal support, a pledge intended to increase support especially among 35- to 65-year-olds who are caught between kids and aging parents in need of support on the other;

An effort to improve math skills, in particular numeracy, by "having up to three math lead teachers in all elementary schools" - a move that comes after last year's standardized test by the Education Quality Alliance of Ontario found half of grade 6 students failed to meet the provincial standards.

Both Horwath and Brown wondered why the Liberals are promising child care plans that extend well beyond their mandate.

I think they (the Liberals) are becoming very comfortable at making promises they're not going to be accountable for.

"I think they (the Liberals) are becoming very comfortable at making promises they're not going to be accountable for," Brown said.

The speech also includes a pledge to continue with many programs, including the new Ontario Student Grant. The OSG will merge many existing programs, and remove a **tax** credit that benefits wealthier families the most, to offer essentially free tuition to low-income students and increase post-secondary support for all but the wealthiest families.

A promised $160 billion for infrastructure will help build or repave 5,000 kilometres of highways - almost half in the north - and 350 kilometres of new rapid transit in city centres such as Waterloo Region, Ottawa and Hamilton. And plans to enact a cap-and-trade system in Ontario will go ahead as planned in early 2017.

Speech from the Throne now online for all you nerds who want to read it for yourself news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/09...((news.ontario.ca»)) #onpoli((twitter.com»))

-

Ashley Csanady (@AshleyCsanady) September 12, 2016((twitter.com»))

Over the summer the government's negotiations with the Ontario Medical Association to create a new physicians services agreement - the fee schedule for doctors' visits - spectacularly broke down when a well-financed coalition challenged the deal and eventually swayed enough votes to kibosh the deal. But the Liberals aren't looking to make nice with the highest-paid doctors; instead the speech includes a specific attack that precious health-care dollars won't be spent on "the highest-billing physicians or highly paid administrators."

It's just one of many overtly political aspects of a speech usually reserved to outlined the government's legislative agenda.

Wynne's push to be a "social justice premier" is furthered by a promise to follow-up on a plan to ensure parental equity in Ontario, so same-sex parents don't have to legally adopt their own children, an issue highlighted by New Democrat Cheri DiNovo and currently being challenged in the courts.

The two-year legislative agenda also includes a lengthy defence of the government's **energy** plans alongside its promise to lower **electricity** bills.

With **hydro** rates rising an average of 8 per cent per year, what is their long-term solution? They can't cut the **HST** again next year

"Over the course of the past decade, Ontario **electricity** ratepayers have helped cover the costs associated with removing dirty coal-fired generation from our **electricity** system," the speech reads. "And while these investments have resulted in increased costs associated with generation, they have also created savings of more than $4 billion a year in health and other costs associated with smog and pollution from coal-fired generation."

It also notes the government "renegotiated" its Green **Energy** Investment Agreement to reduce contract costs by $3.7 billion and created a new Large Renewable Procurement process, which saved another "$4.1 billion as compared to previous forecasts" - meaning the government says it's saving money that has not yet been spent.

All this comes after years of criticisms that the Liberals' green-**energy** policies have driven up costs across the province, with Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk finding last year that

Ontario consumers paid $37-billion more than necessary on their **hydro** bills from 2006 to 2014.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/Darren CalabreseAuditor General Bonnie Lysyk found in her 2015 annual report the Liberals failure to listen to their own experts cost ratepayers $37 billion more than necessary on their **electricity** bills over seven years.

The move to shuffle money around to provide the targeted relief on **electricity** bills was swiftly criticized: Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day said the speech included some positive moves for First Nations, but he questioned the "shell game" the Liberals are playing and their commitment to increasing access to **electricity** in remote communities.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation questioned what good removing the provincial **HST** from power bill will do in the long run:

"With **hydro** rates rising an average of 8 per cent per year, what is their long-term solution? They can't cut the **HST** again next year," said CTF Ontario director Christine Van Geyn. "Paying Ontarians off with their own money isn't just cynical, it's also terrible policy."

Length: 1592 words
Permalink: news.nationalpost.com...»

Ontario promises electricity bill rebates in throne speech

THE NATIONAL

Mon Sep 12 2016, 10:00pm ET

PETER MANSBRIDGE (HOST):

Ontario's government laid out new priorities in the province's throne speech today, including new rebates to offset high **energy** prices. The **rebate** is meant as relief to high **electricity** prices which have risen 70 percent in the last decade. It's about 130 dollars a year for a typical household, 540 dollars annually for some rural families. The Liberal is also promising to create 100, 000 new childcare spaces.

Length: 66 words

Hydro rebates may not go far enough, say Windsor residents

CBC.CA News
Mon Sep 12 2016, 7:42pm ET
Section: Windsor
Byline: CBC News

The province's plan to offer **hydro** rebates to thousands of cash-strapped customers was not received with much fanfare Monday.

The Ontario government announced in its throne speech a plan to remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales **tax** from **hydro** bills, potentially saving hundreds of dollars a year for residents and businesses.

There is hope among Windsor's small business owners that the eliminating of the province's portion of the **HST** will help them with their bottom lines. But places like the Downtown Mission will continue to suffer, while several residents said the gesture is not enough to make a considerable difference.

"It might help a little, but that's probably too little too late," said Gillian Fraser, who lives in the city's east end. "Any little bit will help, obviously, but I don't think that's enough."

Political backlash

Southwestern Ontario politicians slammed the government's plans to give **hydro** rebates.

Windsor West MPP Lisa Gretzky says offering a **rebate** equal to that of Ontario's portion of the **HST** is a start, but it does not go far enough.

"An eight per cent **rebate** is something, but it's not enough," she said. "It's a good first step because people shouldn't have been paying **HST** on their bills to begin with, but It's not enough to really provide relief."

Gretzky says the NDP will continue to push for further rate reductions. She has collected hundreds of **hydro** bills from people in Windsor and she plans to deliver them to Premiere Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of **Energy** on Tuesday.

Conservative MPP Rick Nicholls says there needs to be more transparency on utility bills. He knows of some residents who pay more for delivery charges then **hydro** itself and he says people need to know why.

More reductions needed

Eliminating Ontario's portion of the **HST** will be a big help to small businesses, but this is just one step in the right direction, according to the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"Often times businesses run at margins of between five and 15 per cent, so it could be the difference of being profitable and not profitable in some circumstances," said Chamber president Matt Marchand.

Chamber members have been lobbying to lower the province's **hydro** rates. An eight-per-cent reduction is just the start, Marchand explained.

"We're going to keep pushing for the cost of **electricity** and the entire cost of doing business in Ontario to drop to a competitive level," he said.

Officials from one of Windsor's biggest shelters and soup kitchens say they do not expect to see much benefit from the **rebate**. The Downtown Mission already receives rebates on the **tax** portion of their **electricity** rates, which means the new **rebate** may not equate to any new savings.

"I'm not sure if it's going to help us at all," said Ron Dunn, executive director at the Mission. "We would like to see a portion of the cost off the actual bill."

Some clients at the Downtown Mission will see the benefits of eliminating a portion of the **HST**, but most people using the Mission's facilities have their **hydro** included in their rent.

Any **hydro** reduction will largely benefit landlords, not the clients who are struggling to pay their rent, Dunn explained.

"Wouldn't it be great if some landlords stepped up and offered some reduction in rent?" Dunn said. "I think I know what landlords will say to that, but there's always hope."

Length: 568 words

ELECTRICITY REBATES
POWER & POLITICS
Mon Sep 12 2016, 5:00pm ET
Byline: GLENN THIBEAULT

ROSEMARY BARTON (NEWSCASTER): YOUR GOVERNMENT ALSO INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT NEW MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT ONTARIO COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL RATEPAYERS CAN ALSO BENEFIT FROM LOWER **ELECTRICITY** COSTS.

Rosemary: THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT MAKING SOME BIG PROMISES IN ITS THRONE SPEECH TODAY, PRETTY EXPENSIVE ONES POTENTIALLY TOO.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS. PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN CITIES IN ONTARIO WILL GET A **REBATE** ON THEIR **ELECTRICITY** COSTS, ADDING UP TO ABOUT 130 BUCKS A YEAR.

FOR PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS, THE **REBATE** WILL BE MUCH LARGER, ABOUT 540 BUCKS A YEAR.

THE GOVERNMENT ALSO PROMISING TO CREATE 100,000 NEW CHILD CARE SPACES IN THE PROVINCE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS BUT HERE'S THE QUESTION, HOW WILL THEY PAY FOR IT ALL?

JOINING ME NOW FROM TORONTO, ONTARIO'S MINISTER OF **ENERGY** GLENN THIBEAULT.

NICE TO SEE YOU, MINISTER.

NICE TO SEE YOU, ROSIE.

Rosemary: OBVIOUSLY PEOPLE WERE REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INCREASED **ELECTRICITY** RATES.

THAT'S SOMETHING I GUESS YOU'RE TRYING TO ADDRESS WITH THIS.

HOW IS A **REBATE**, THOUGH, THE ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM THAT THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PAY MORE ON A MONTHLY BASIS?

LOOKING AT THE **REBATE**, IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE, AND FOR US AS A GOVERNMENT, WE RECOGNIZED AND HEARD FROM PEOPLE THAT THE RATES WERE CONCERNED SO WE ACTED ON THAT BUT IT TOOK US A DECADE TO WE BROUGHT FORWARD THESE REBATES TO HELP THEM WITH THEIR EVERYDAY COSTS.

Rosemary: A COUPLE QUESTIONS. YOU ARE ALSO IN THE PROCESS OF PRIVATIZING **HYDRO** ONTARIO.

HOW LONG WILL THIS **REBATE** LAST AS YOU SELL BIGGER AND BIGGER CHUNKS OF IT?

WE'RE BROADENING THE SALE OF **HYDRO** ONE, BUT THESE REBATES ARE ACTUALLY COMING FROM TWO YEARS.

SO THE FIRST ONE, WHEN YOU TALKED ABOUT THE PROVINCIAL **REBATE** PORTION OF THE **HST**, THAT'S COMING FROM THE **TAX** BASE AND THAT'S ONGOING.

THE SECOND ONE IS CALLED THE TRIPLE RP.

WE'RE ACTUALLY SUPPORTING THEM BY 20%.

THAT COMES FROM THE RATE BASE.

SO THESE ARE ONGOING SUPPORT **REBATE** PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES RIGHT ACROSS THE PROVINCE.

Rosemary: OKAY, BUT IF YOU ARE -- BEAR WITH ME HERE.

IF YOU ARE CONTINUING TO PRIVATIZE **HYDRO** ONE -- EXCUSE ME, I CALLED IT **HYDRO** ONTARIO -- YOU WILL HAVE LESS REVENUE COMING IN FROM THAT AS A SOURCE OF REVENUE.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN SUSTAIN THIS LONG TERM.

WITH THE SALE OF **HYDRO** ONE THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH RATES.

WHAT WE'RE DOING TODAY IS LOOKING AT MAKING SURE THAT WE'VE BALANCED OUR BUDGETS WHICH WE HAVE.

SO NEXT YEAR WE'RE ON TRACK TO MAKING SURE THAT WE'VE BALANCED OUR BUDGET.

WITH THAT, WE THINK THE BENEFICIARIES, RIGHT, THE FIRST BENEFICIARIES OF THIS BALANCED BUDGET SHOULD BE ONTARIO FAMILIES SO THAT'S WHY WE'RE BRINGING FORWARD THIS **REBATE** FROM THE **TAX** BASE.

IT'S NOT COMING FROM THE SALE OF **HYDRO** ONE.

Rosemary: WOULDN'T IT MAKE MORE SENSE TO REGULATE HOW **HYDRO** ONE ACTUALLY FIXES ITS **ELECTRICITY** RATES TO MAKE SURE THAT PEOPLE JUST PAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE INSTEAD OF GIVING PEOPLE REBATES?

SO WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT **HYDRO** ONE, THEY'RE MORE OF THE CUSTOMER -- OR THE PROVIDER TO OUR RURAL AREAS.

WITH THE 8% PIECE, THAT'S COMING FROM MANY OF OUR LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS. FOR EXAMPLE, I'M THE MPP FOR SUDBURY SO GREATER SUDBURY UTILITIES. WE'RE GOING TO BE WORKING WITH THEM TO PROVIDE THE 8% **REBATE** TO THE FAMILIES AND THE BUSINESSES IN SUDBURY. WHEN IT COMES TO **HYDRO** ONE, THEY'RE THE PROVIDER IN THE RURAL AREAS, AND WE'RE MAKING SURE THOSE FAMILIES ARE GETTING A 20% REDUCTION BECAUSE THAT 20% WILL BE GOING TOO WHAT IS CALLED THE DELIVERY CHARGE, THE SUPPLY COST TO GETTING THAT **ELECTRICITY** TO FAMILIES SO WHAT WE

WANT TO DO THERE, ROSIE, IS MAKE SURE WE CAN LOWER THOSE RATES FOR THEM TO BRING THEM IN LINE WITH THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE BECAUSE WE RECOGNIZED THAT THERE IS A HIGHER COST TO MAKING SURE THAT WE GET THE **ENERGY** TO THESE FAMILIES AND WE WANT TO ENSURE WE FIND WAYS TO HELP THEM.

THIS **REBATE** OF 20% IS A SIGNIFICANT WAY OF HELPING THEM.

Rosemary: THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE LEADER PATRICK BROWN IS SAYING THIS HIGH COST OF **ELECTRICITY** DIDN'T SEEM TO BE A PROBLEM LAST MAY WHEN YOUR COMPETITORS HAD SAID, LISTEN, WE JUST WANT OUR RATES -- YOUR PREDECESSOR SAID WE WANT RATES TO BE COMPETITIVE.

IS THIS REALLY ABOUT SLUMPING POLLS AND TRYING TO GET RE-ELECTED OR IS THIS ABOUT ADDRESSING A PROBLEM THAT YOU'VE JUST WOKEN UP TO?

WHY NOW?

ROSIE, YOU AND I HAVE BEEN IN THIS GAME LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW GOVERNMENTS AREN'T THAT NIMBLE.

I WISH WE WERE. WE HAD THE BYELECTION LAST WEEK.

THE REASON WE ARE DOING THIS NOW, FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS WE'VE BEEN BUILDING A SYSTEM THAT'S SAFE, RELIABLE AND CLEAN AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO RECOGNIZE WE NEED TO TAKE THIS TO THE NEXT LEVEL AND MAKE THIS AS AFFORDABLE AS WE CAN FOR AS MANY FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES ACROSS THE PROVINCE.

MAKING SURE WE CONTINUE TO INVEST IN OUR **ELECTRICITY** SYSTEM IS SOMETHING THAT WE SAW AS IMPORTANT AND WE'VE BEEN DOING THAT, AS I SAID, FOR THE LAST DECADE, BUT WE'VE ALSO BEEN TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO MITIGATE OUR RATES, AND WE'VE DONE THAT WITH THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE SAMSUNG AGREEMENT WHICH SAVED $3.7 BILLION, THE CONTINUED OPERATIONS OF THE PICKERING PLANT WHICH SAVED $600 MILLION.

SO ALL OF THESE SAVINGS CONTINUE TO ADD UP AND PUT DOWNWARD MITIGATION ON OUR RATES WHICH IS SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR YEARS.

Rosemary: SO IS THE COMMITMENT TO ELIMINATE THE DEFICIT BY I THINK IT'S 2017-18 FOR YOU GUYS?

IS THAT STILL IN PLACE? AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GET THERE GIVEN THESE NEW REBATES?

I KNOW MINISTER SOUSA WILL BE BRINGING FORWARD THE PUBLIC ACCOUNT DOCUMENTS VERY SHORTLY THAT WILL SHOW HOW WE'RE GOING TO BE MEETING OUR BALANCED BUDGETS. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT I'M VERY PROUD TO BE PART OF A GOVERNMENT THAT IS ACTUALLY GOING TO MEET THAT COMMITMENT.

AS I SAID, RIGHT NOW WHEN WE'RE ON TRACK TO MEET OUR DEFICIT AND MEET OUR BALANCED BUDGETS THAT WE WANT ONTARIO FAMILIES TO BE THE FIRST TO BENEFIT FROM THAT.

Rosemary: OKAY, WE'LL LEAVE IT THERE, MINISTER.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME TODAY, APPRECIATE IT.

GREAT. NICE TALKING TO YOU, ROSIE.

Rosemary: ONTARIO **ENERGY** MINISTER GLENN THIBEAULT.

Length: 1080 words

THE POWER PANEL: MACKAY NOT RUNNING, CLINTON'S HEALTH, HARPER'S NEW JOB, ONTARIO THRONE SPEECH
POWER & POLITICS
Mon Sep 12 2016, 5:00pm ET
Byline: BRAD LAVIGNE; JOSH WINGROVE; CHAD ROGERS; AMANDA ALVARO

Rosemary: WELCOME BACK TO THE

POWER PANEL, AMANDA, CHAD, BRAD

AND JOSH.

…

Rosemary: BEFORE WE START TALKING ABOUT DOLLY PARTON OR SOMETHING CRAZY, LET'S MOVE ON TO THE ONTARIO THRONE SPEECH TODAY. THEY PROROGUED LAST WEEK AS AN ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THE FALLOUT FROM THE LOST BYELECTION AND A SLUMP IN THE POLLS.

TODAY THEY MADE A COUPLE OF ANNOUNCEMENTS, ONE ON **HYDRO** REBATES THAT WAS ANNOUNCED, ONE, ON CREATING NEW 100,000 CHILD CARE SPACES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. THEY SAY THEY CAN STILL GET BACK ON TRACK, GET OUT OF DEFICIT BY 2017-18. BRAD, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF WHAT IS ACTUALLY GOING ON HERE IN TERMS OF STRATEGY?

DID YOU WANT TO GO FIRST?

NO, I'M GOOD.

Rosemary: JOSH GETS TO GO FIRST.

HE PHYSICALLY SLUMPED SO I HAVE TO PHYSICALLY LET HIM GO.

I'LL BE VERY QUICK. Rosemary: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE QUICK!

YOU GO FIRST. YOU'RE VERY EAGER.

ALWAYS, ALWAYS.

IT'S SEPTEMBER.

WE'RE ALL FILL OF **ENERGY**.

THIS IS A MOVE BY GOVERNMENT THAT I THINK IS RECOGNIZING THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IT'S IN.

I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE VERY SURPRISED TO SEE THEM WIN A MAJORITY THE LAST TIME.

THEY'LL BE HARD PRESSED TO WIN A MAJORITY I THINK AGAIN.

SO THEY'VE TAKEN THESE POCKETBOOK MEASURES, AS SOME JOURNALISTS WOULD DESCRIBE THEM, NOT INSIGNIFICANT.

THEY SOLD OFF A STAKE OF **HYDRO** ONE, A VERY LARGE I.P.O.

THEY HAVE RAISED **TAX** RATES PARTICULARLY ON HIGH EARNERS. ONTARIO IS RATED VERY LOWLY FOR COMPETITIVENESS BECAUSE POWER COSTS ARE THROUGH THE ROOF IN LARGE PART BECAUSE WE PHASED OUT COAL WHICH WAS A DECISION MADE FOR MANY REASONS OF COURSE.

THEY HAD A **HYDRO** ONE CONTRACT AND NOW THEY'RE OFFERING A **REBATE**. THEY HAD A BALANCE AND NOW THEY'RE SPENDING IT IN A VERY VISIBLE HARPER-ESQUE, YOU KNOW WHO GAVE YOU YOUR MONEY WAY.

I THINK IT UNDERSCORES THE CHANGING TIDES IN ONTARIO THAT THE LIBERALS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY COMMITTED TO THEIR -- WHAT HAD BEEN THEIR VISION, THAT THEY'RE WILLING TO MAKE THESE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND THE VERY FACT -- YOU DO A THRONE SPEECH WHEN YOU TRYING TO RESET THE AGENDA. THERE'S A REASON THEY'RE TRYING TO RESET THE AGENDA.

Rosemary: I'M GLAD I LET YOU GO FIRST.

BRAD?

JOSH TOOK ALL MY STUFF!

THAT'S WHY WE NEVER LET JOSH GO FIRST! I HAD THREE COFFEES TODAY.

THERE'S SOMETHING INTERESTING ABOUT THE TACTIC. THERE'S NO FEWER SITTING DAYS THAN WHAT THEY ALREADY HAD PLANNED.

WHY RESET WHEN YOU'VE GOT PRETTY MUCH THE SAME -- AND YOU'VE GOT THE SAME AMOUNT OF SITTING DAYS AND THEY'RE BRINGING BACK ALL THE LEGISLATION THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN CANCELED WITH THE PROROGATION.

Rosemary: WHICH IS WEIRD, WHICH IS UNUSUAL.

TRYING TO READ THROUGH THE LEAVES HERE, THEY'RE PROBABLY, AS JOSH RIGHTFULLY POINTS OUT, THEY NEED A REBOOT BECAUSE THEY'RE SUFFERING FROM THE BYELECTION LOSS PLUS KATHLEEN WYNNE HAS GOT SOME PRETTY BAD NUMBERS. THERE'S A SENSE OF MALAISE.

THEY HAD AN OPEN LINE ON CBC ABOUT THE THRONE SPEECH AND CALLER AFTER CALLER WERE TALKING ABOUT HOW THEY REGRETTED VOTING FOR WYNNE A COUPLE YEARS AGO.

YOU HAVE TO BRING BACK SOME LEGISLATION WITHOUT THE EMBARRASSMENT OF AMENDING THAT LEGISLATION IN COMMITTEE REGARDLESS OF WHAT STAGE IT WAS AT. YOU CAN BRING BACK AMENDED LEGISLATION AND BASICALLY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING HIT THE RESET BUTTON.

BUT ON THE ISSUE -- JOSH IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE PROVINCE WHETHER IT'S DOWNTOWN TORONTO OR THROUGHOUT THE NORTH IS **ELECTRICITY**. NOT MANY PEOPLE SAID I VOTED FOR KATHLEEN WYNNE BECAUSE I WANTED **HYDRO** PRIVATIZED.

NOW THEY'RE HANDING OUT THE BIG CHEQUE. THEY'RE GETTING MORE OF A BANG -- I SUBMIT THEY'RE GETTING MORE OF A BANG FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT BECAUSE THEY PROROGUED, DID THE THRONE SPEECH AND DRAG THIS OUT FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS THAN HAD THEY COME OUT AND WOKE UP MONDAY MORNING AND TALKED ABOUT THE **REBATE**. ON THE POLICY FRONT, THIS MAKES LITTLE OR NO SENSE BECAUSE PEOPLE -- PARTICULARLY IN RURAL ONTARIO WHO ARE PAYING REALLY HIGH RATES, THESE REBATES WILL BE A DROP IN THE BUCKET, WILL BE USED UP PRIOR TO THEM GETTING THE VOTE, AND WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

WHY DON'T YOU LOWER MY **ELECTRICITY** COSTS.

THEY CAN'T BECAUSE THEY'VE SOLD OUT AS JOSH RIGHTFULLY POINTS OUT.

THIS IS A BIG ISSUE AND THEY'RE TRYING TO STICK HANDLE IT IN THE CRISIS MODE.

Rosemary: IF YOU DON'T HAVE MONEY TO PAY YOUR **ELECTRICITY**, I'M NOT SURE A **REBATE** IS GOING TO HELP YOU.

IF IT'S ONLY A PORTION.

Rosemary: CHAD AND AMANDA AND I'VE GOT TO GO.

I'D QUICKLY SAY THAT KATHLEEN WYNNE HAS DECIDED SHE WANTS TO COMPETE IN THE NEXT ELECTION.

SHE REALIZES RIGHT NOW SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE'S DONE FOR.

BUT SHE'S ALSO TODAY BY ANNOUNCING THE DAY CARE SPACES ANNOUNCED SHE'D RATHER RUN AGAINST PATRICK BROWN THAN ANDREA HORWATH AND SHE'S TRYING TO STEAL THE NDP'S ISSUE BUCKET BEFORE THEY GET OUT OF THE GATE.

ON THE SUBSIDIZING OF THE POWER BILLS, **HYDRO** AND **ELECTRICITY** POLICY IN ONTARIO IS SO BASTARDIZED AND GROSS, MOST ONTARIANS REGARD THEIR POWER BILL AS A RANSOM NOTE. YOU PAY MORE TO GET THE POWER TO YOU. THIS IS THE FOURTH ROUND TO TRY AND STEM THE BLEEDING WHILE BILLS ARE STILL GOING UP AS MUCH AS 40% IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

THIS IS A TOTAL ADMISSION OF DEFEAT. THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR KATHLEEN WYNNE.

AND NOW IT'S REALLY AN AUDITION,

IS IT GOING TO BE PATRICK BROWN OR IS IT GOING TO BE ANDREA HORWATH.
Rosemary: I LOVE HOW CHAD WAVERS SO OFTEN IN HIS DECLARATION!

AMANDA? VERY DOOMY.

I ALWAYS WISH WE HAD SOME KIND OF SOUND FOR YOU.

Rosemary: WE'VE GOT NEW MUSIC! WE'LL FIND ONE FOR HIM. OKAY, AMANDA.

THIS DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT POLICY.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT PARLIAMENT.

THIS IS ALL ABOUT POLITICS.

THIS IS ABOUT A GOVERNMENT THAT'S BEEN ON THEIR BACK FOOT, BEEN BACKED IN TO A CORNER, BEEN ON THE DEFENCE FOR MANY MONTHS, HAD A REALLY DIFFICULT SUMMER, CULMINATING IN THIS DEFLECTION.

THE POLL NUMBERS ARE DOWN.

THEY NEEDED A RESET.

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. A THRONE SPEECH ALLOWS YOU, LIKE BRAD SAID, TO COMMAND THE AGENDA FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS.

YOU CAN START PARCELING OUT THESE LITTLE ANNOUNCEABLES, SOME REALLY BIG ANNOUNCEABLES, AND, FRANKLY VERY RETAIL.

THE KIND OF THINGS THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT ARE THE STUFF THAT FAMILIES CARE ABOUT, MONEY IN YOUR POCKET.

WHILE IT MAY NOT MATTER TWO YEARS FROM NOW, IT MATTERS TODAY. TODAY PEOPLE WAKE UP, TOMORROW PEOPLE ARE GOING TO WAKE UP WITH "THE LONDON FREE PRESS" AND "THE BARRIE EXAMINER" AND THEY'RE GOING TO READ THEY'RE GOING TO GET A CHEQUE.

IT'S A SMART MOVE FOR THE LIBERALS TO RESET, CHANGE, GET OFF OF THE FUNDRAISING ISSUES,

GET OFF OF THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DOGGING THEM AND START OWNING THE NARRATIVE.

IT'S ABOUT TIME.

IT MATTERS FOR CANADA BECAUSE ONTARIO, WE ARE RELYING ON THEM TO CARRY OUR ECONOMIC REBOUND RIGHT NOW AND IT AIN'T HAPPENING SO FAR.

IF HER NUMBERS DON'T TURN AROUND, SHE'S OUT IN THE NEW AMANDA.

WE'LL SEE YOU SOON.

globeandmail.com

Wynne's way: Rob the poor, help the rich; As the big thinkers at Queen's Park bask in air-conditioned bliss, more and more folks are struggling to pay their bills

theglobeandmail.com
Mon Sep 12 2016, 4:15pm ET
Section: Other
Byline: MARGARET WENTE

Out in rural Ontario, far away from the lush grounds of Queen's Park, a crisis is brewing. **Electricity** rates have soared so high that many people can't afford to pay their **hydro** bills. Local charities have a name for it: **energy** poverty. The problem is so bad that they've set up relief funds to help protect families from the threat of disconnection.

No wonder Kathleen Wynne, Ontario's Premier, is running for cover. The Liberal government's **energy** policy has been a disaster for lower-income citizens, especially in rural areas, where delivery charges are significantly higher. Many rural households now face **hydro** bills (globalnews.ca») of $400 or $500 a month - double what they were 10 years ago. As the big thinkers in Toronto bask in air-conditioned bliss, more and more folks are struggling to cover both the **hydro** bill and food.

"People have become obsessive," says Francesca Dobbyn, who is head of the United Way for Bruce and Grey Counties. "They're sitting in the dark. They're walling off part of their homes. They're unplugging the stove, the kitchen clock, the microwave." Sadly, utility providers (which disconnected 60,000 (globalnews.ca») customers last year) aren't especially sympathetic. "They told one woman to tell her kids to stop playing Xbox."

With sky-high **hydro** rates and other political calamities on her plate, Ms. Wynne desperately needs to jolt her government's approval ratings back to life before the next election. On Monday, she promised to axe the provincial-sales **tax** on **electricity** for everyone. She also promised to cut rural rates by making urban customers pick up some of the higher delivery costs. Ms. Dobbyn says it's a "great start."

Whether it's a long-term solution to our **energy** woes is another matter. Ontario's **energy** poverty afflicts the whole economy, not just the poor. This poverty is largely policy-induced - the consequence of megalomaniacal green schemes that have transferred billions of dollars from taxpayers to purveyors of wind towers and solar panels. Even as the costs of solar plummeted, the prices paid to contractors did not. Lucky players got rich quick.

Meanwhile, partly because of conservation, **electricity** demand has fallen over the past decade. Ontario now produces vastly more power than it needs, or will need for many years. That hasn't curbed the government's enthusiasm for plunging even deeper into wind and solar. Today we're paying big bucks to generate power we will never use, and paying again for the U.S. to take it off our hands.

The irony of such reckless mismanagement is exquisite. Because the overall costs of the system are largely fixed, lower **electricity** use won't drive down rates. In fact, the less **hydro** we use, the more expensive per unit it gets. Wash your clothes at midnight if you want, but the cost of **hydro** is going to go up anyway.

Saving the sales **tax** will be nice, of course. But the government still has to pay for all those hospitals and schools, so it's going to have to get that money from somewhere else. As any economist will tell you, across-the-board cuts (subsidies) to **energy** costs are always a sop to the rich, since the well-off consume (www.statcan.gc.ca») a greater share of power to run their 4,000 square-foot McMansions. This plan is expected to drain $1-billion (www.theglobeandmail.com») from provincial coffers. It's a shell game they're playing. It's still your pocket that's being picked.

The Wynne government loves to bask in the virtues of "sustainable" **energy**. But its deranged pursuit of green **energy** at any cost - dating back to the days when Gerald Butts, Justin Trudeau's BFF, was cutting his teeth at Queen's Park - is not economically sustainable at all. **Electricity** prices in Ontario are rising faster than anywhere else in North America. Many experts, including Bank of Montreal chief economist Doug Porter, warn that soaring **hydro** rates are among the biggest threats to the provincial economy. "Let's just say it is going to do very serious harm to the Ontario economy if we continue to see double-digit increases in **electricity** rates," he told (globalnews.ca») Global TV.

At least there is a certain transparency to **hydro** rates. But soon, the Wynne government will introduce cap and trade in an attempt to lower carbon emissions. Cap and trade will be a black hole where all light vanishes and the real costs are unknown. As the sweltering masses switch off their fans in hopes of saving money, the progressive policy engineers at Queen's Park will be patting each other on the back once again. They've never met the masses. But they're sure they know what's good for them.

Follow this link to view this story on globeandmail.com: (www.theglobeandmail.com»)

Length: 805 words

Hydro rebates may not go far enough, says Downtown Mission

CBC.CA News
Mon Sep 12 2016, 1:36pm ET
Section: Windsor
Byline: CBC News

Plans to eliminate Ontario's portion of the **HST** from **hydro** bills will help small businesses, but it won't do much for places like the Downtown Mission.

The provincial government announced plans in Tuesday's throne speech to provide rebates for urban and residential residents as well as businesses to reduce **hydro** costs.

Those reductions will be helpful for small businesses that are often struggling to keep their doors open, say business representatives in the Windsor region. But the savings might be minimal for places like the Mission, which already receives rebates on the **tax** portion of their **electricity** rates.

"I'm not sure if it's going to help us at all," said Ron Dunn, executive director at the Mission. "We would like to see a portion of the cost off the actual bill."

More reductions needed

Eliminating Ontario's portion of the **HST** will be a big help small businesses, but this is just one small step in the right direction, according to the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"Often times businesses run at margins of between five and 15 per cent, so it could be the difference of being profitable and not profitable in some circumstances," said Chamber president Matt Marchand.

Chamber members have been lobbying to lower the province's **hydro** rates. An eight-per-cent reduction is just the start, Marchand explained.

"We're going to keep pushing for the cost of **electricity** and the entire cost of doing business in Ontario to drop to a competitive level," he said.

Some clients at the Downtown Mission will see the benefits of eliminating a portion of the **HST**, but most people using the Mission's facilities have their **hydro** included in their rent.

Any **hydro** reduction will largely benefit landlords, not the clients who are struggling to pay their rent, Dunn explained.

"Wouldn't it be great if some landlords stepped up and offered some reduction in rent?" Dunn said. "I think I know what landlords will say to that, but there's always hope."

 Length: 326 words