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From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
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Today's News

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Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Industry News

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Liberal hydro costs; a 'disgrace'; Hospitals getting hammered: NDP

Toronto Sun - Wed Mar 22 2017
Byline: Shawn Jeffords
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CBC.CA News - Tue Mar 21 2017, 7:02pm ET
Byline:CBC News

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Horwath says Ontario energy costs a threat to health care

thespec.com - Tue Mar 21 2017
Byline:sbuist@thespec.com

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Byline: Robert BenzieRob Ferguson

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Energy minister rejects Hardeman's criticisms; Glenn Thibeault slams provincial Tories for not offering their own plan to reduce electricity costs

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Full Articles

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Toronto Sun - Wed Mar 22 2017
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The Liberal government's plan to slash hydro rates will offer no relief for Ontario hospitals, some of which have seen their bills go up by as much as 105%, the NDP says.

Andrea Horwath says documents released to the New Democrats through a Freedom of Information request show that many hospitals in the province have seen doubledigit electricity cost increases over the last six years.

That's valuable money being pulled from patient care and a new government plan to slash rates by 25% offers no reduction for hospitals, she said.

"If you're taking money from your operating budget to pay electricity bills instead of frontline patient care, then it's going to have an impact," she said. "Look, I think it's a disgrace what the Liberal's have done."

According to the documents, Toronto's University Health Network has spent $6 million more on hydro since 2010, a 39% increase.

Sinai Health System has spent $1.45 million more, a 48% rate jump.

Toronto East Michael Garron Hospital's hydro bills have gone up by $1.3 million or 67%. Outside of Toronto the figures are also substantial.

At Hamilton's St. Joseph's Healthcare, hydro costs are up $4.16 million, or 105% in six years.

At London Health Sciences Centre, hydro costs have jumped by $2 million, or 29%.

At Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus, hydro rates are up $880,000 or 49% in five years.

The Liberal government announced three weeks ago that it would slash hydro rates by re-amortizing long-term energy deals.

That means Ontarians will pay less for electricity in the short-term, but will pay an estimated $25 billion in interest over the next 30 years for the short-term relief.

But that plan doesn't include hospitals.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins downplayed the costs, saying they represent a small portion of the overall hospital budgets and none of the province's hospital CEOs have complained to him about the issue.

But Hoskins couldn't say whether any of the targeted relief from hydro-rate increases would be offered to hospitals.

"For a hospital's operating budget, on average, electricity costs amount to roughly 1% of their budget," he said. "There's no doubt over the past years because of the fiscal situation the province has been in, hospitals have a number of challenges and we've been working with them on those challenges."

Horwath slammed Hoskins for not addressing the issue.

The NDP plans to cut hydro rates by 30% and would slash other costs to hospitals, according to the party. sjeffords@postmedia.com

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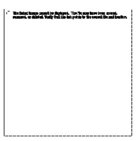

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St. Joe's sees hydro bill double in just six years

CBC.CA News - Tue Mar 21 2017, 7:02pm ET
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St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton paid more than $8 million for electricity in 2016, 104 per cent more than it did six years earlier.

Those numbers were front and centre at Queen's Park yesterday as the Ontario NDP revealed dramatic increases in hospital electricity bills to continue to hammer the Liberal government over increasing power costs in the province.

For the NDP, the extra millions hospitals have to put toward hydro come at a time when the NDP say the Liberal government is under-funding health care across Ontario.

NDP Ontario leader Andrea Horwath addressed the issue Tuesday in Queen's Park saying the costly bills are putting even more pressure on patient care.

"It's clear that hydro costs are hurting families in more ways than one ? it's hurting people every month when the bill comes," Horwath said. "It's also hurting the services we count on, like hospitals."

She also cited electricity increases for hospitals in London and Windsor.

Horwath said hydro rates have already cost Ontario's healthcare dearly.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario," said Horwath, who is MPP for Hamilton Centre.

"There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter."

In reply to her question about St. Joe's, Erik Hoskins, minister of health and long-term care in Ontario, curiously spoke of an increase the province provided to Hamilton Health Science, Hamilton's other corporation.

"I'm pleased to support to the legislature we provided an increase of 3.6 per cent to [Hamilton Health Sciences], $29.4 million more to their operating budget than the previous year."

Hydro rates in Ontario have been a hot-button topic since rates began increasing in 2015. After a trying 2016 that saw public backlash peak after reports surfaced of hydro companies cutting off power in the dead of winter, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a long-awaited decrease for hydro rates in Ontario.

Earlier this month, Premier Kathleen Wynne unveiled a plan that would slash residential and small business hydro bills by an average of 17 per cent and see billions in costs lifted off customers in the short term.

It meant that some $28 billion in costs would be refinanced, with future ratepayers shouldering the interest.

Maria Hayes, senior public affairs specialist for St. Joe's said while the hospital saw its hydro bills increase, its consumption went up as well ? by roughly 27 per cent. That's because during that period, the hospital had a major expansion, opening its West 5th campus, which focuses on mental health and diagnostic services.

"St. Joe's has taken a number of actions to decrease utility costs across our sites and will continue to look for further opportunities for savings," Hayes said. "We welcome any form of relief to help address these costs."

'Health care is at a tipping point'

Hoskins said he has yet to hear of a hospital struggling to pay their hydro bill.

"In the almost three years I've been minister of health I have not had a single hospital board or CEO come to me and say the component of their budget that goes towards electricity has been a burden to them."

According to the NDP, a number of complaints have been made by hospitals across the province that have seen hydro bills affect their budgets with one Windsor hospital expecting $700,000 increase on their hydro bill this year.

The Liberal government hoped their 17 per cent decrease might help remedy the issue for hospitals and residents across Ontario but the NDP isn't convinced the Liberal plan will work.

Horwath recently released an NDP plan that would cut hydro bills by as much as 30 per cent. The plan includes putting Hydro One back into public hands, which the NDP say would return an additional $7 billion to the province that could go toward Ontario services like hospitals.

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Horwath says Ontario energy costs a threat to health care

thespec.com - Tue Mar 21 2017
Byline:sbuist@thespec.com

Rapidly rising electricity costs for Ontario hospitals are a threat to health care, warns provincial NDP Leader Andrea Horwath.

A prime example, Horwath noted in the Ontario legislature Tuesday, is Hamilton's St. Joseph's Healthcare, which has seen its electricity costs more than double from 2010 to 2016.

During those six years, electricity costs at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton rose from almost $4 million in 2010 to $8.1 million in 2016, an increase of 105 per cent, based on numbers obtained by the NDP through a freedom of information request.

The figures include St. Joe's Charlton Avenue site, King Street East site and the West 5th site.

Part of the reason for the whopping increase at St. Joe's was the replacement of the West 5th site with a new building in early 2014 that is twice the size of the previous facility on the Mountain.

Even still, St. Joe's saw its average price paid for a kilowatt-hour jump from 10.2 cents in 2010 to 16.4 cents per kwh in 2016.

Premier Kathleen Wynne announced earlier this month that residential ratepayers will receive an average 25 per cent cut to their electricity bills starting this summer. It will also impact half a million small businesses and farms. Rates will increase no higher than inflation for the next four years.

But the plan will ultimately cost ratepayers about $25 billion more in interest, the government has said. The plan will take part of the global adjustment charge off bills for the next 10 years, but the cost isn't being eliminated, it's being deferred to future ratepayers, racking up interest on that debt in the meantime.

The NDP canvassed an array of nine hospital systems in Toronto, Hamilton, London and Windsor.

The nine hospitals surveyed by the NDP plus Hamilton Health Sciences, which provided its figures to The Spectator, paid about $15.5 million in extra electricity costs combined in 2016 compared to 2010.

Added together, their electricity costs went from $33.4 million to $48.8 million in six years, an increase of 46 per cent.

"Every dollar spent on these rising electricity costs is a dollar that's not spent on patient care," Horwath said in an interview.

"It's going to impact their ability to provide the kind of care they want to provide to patients," said Horwath, the MPP for Hamilton Centre.

"We've seen front-line health-care workers being laid off," she added. "There's been 1,500 registered nurses given the pink slip since January of 2015.

"That's a lot of registered nurses to be walking the sidewalk."

A spokesperson for St. Joe's said the hospital requires large amounts of energy to run equipment such as MRI and CT scanners and operating rooms in addition to providing heat and lighting.

"Like all hospitals, we continually face inflationary pressures and increasing costs," stated Karen Langstaff, chief of facility planning and patient support services at St. Joe's.

"The additional cost of hydro is a very significant additional yearly inflation cost that we must manage if we are to balance our budgets."

At Hamilton Health Sciences' seven sites, electricity costs from 2010 to 2016 shot up by more than 50 per cent, even though electricity consumption at HHS dropped by more than a third.

Electricity costs for HHS went from $2.6 million in 2010 to $4 million in 2016 while consumption dropped from 35 million kilowatt-hours to 23 million kwh.

Chris Cuthbert, manager of co-generation and energy for HHS, said higher energy costs put more pressure on hospital budgets, which tend to get tighter each year.

"It's not like you can just shut the lights off when you've got patients in the building," Cuthbert said. "We've got less money to do other things because we're spending more money on electricity.

"The good thing is it's created a lot more will to conserve," Cuthbert said.

The numbers obtained by the NDP show significant increases in electricity costs at some hospitals even though consumption was sharply reduced over six years.

At Toronto General Hospital, electricity costs rose 35 per cent from 2010 to 2016 while consumption dropped 14 per cent.

At Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital and Toronto Western Hospital, electricity costs at both sites rose by 21 per cent from 2010 to 2016, even though their electricity consumption dropped by about 25 per cent.

Toronto East General Hospital saw its electricity costs increase by 67 per cent.

At Mount Sinai and Windsor Regional hospitals, costs shot up nearly 50 per cent over the six years.

Horwath said high electricity costs aren't just an issue for hospitals.

During a recent tour of northern Ontario, she learned the small town of Desbarats near Sault Ste. Marie may have to close its arena because of overwhelming energy costs.

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Windsor Regional Hospital Hydro Bill Increases Almost 50%

blackburnnews.com - Tue Mar 21 2017

The cost of electricity at Windsor Regional Hospital's Met Campus has jumped nearly $1-million over a five-year period.

Based on information obtained by the NDP, the total billed amount for hydro at the hospital rose from $1,778,831 to $2,659,009 between 2011 to 2016. That's an increase of 49%.

"Health care is at a tipping point in Ontario… There have already been frontline workers laid off at many hospitals, and with skyrocketing hydro bills, hospitals are being squeezed tighter," says NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in a media release. "How can the hospital be expected to continue provide high quality patient care when Premier [Kathleen] Wynne is squeezing them like this?"

On March 2, Wynne announced that her government would take action to reduce Ontarians' hydro bills by a further 17%, on top of the 8% saving that resulted from the lifting of the provincial portion of the HST on hydro.

The NDP also released its hydro plan in late-February. The party claims it can cut hydro bills by 30% by scraping time-of-use premiums, cap profits for private producers, have rural residents pay the same delivery charges as city-dwellers, and reverse the sell-off of Hydro One.

To view a year-to-year break down of hydro costs at the Met Campus, click here.

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Ontario PC leader pledges to scrap cap-and-trade, restore auditor's veto on government ads

thestar.com - Tue Mar 21 2017
Byline: Robert BenzieRob Ferguson

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown is making some promises he may have to keep if he wins next year's Ontario election.

On Tuesday, Brown vowed to withdraw the province from the Western Climate Initiative, which it joined in 2010 in partnership with Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, California, and six other American states.

The Conservative chief, who leads Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne in public opinion polls, has been deliberately coy about his plans for governing after the June 7, 2018 vote.

With a policy conference set for November in Toronto, the Tories want to make as few commitments as possible in order to appease grassroots members and avoid the missteps that have kept them in opposition since 2003.

But as Ontario's first carbon-price auction kicks off Wednesday, Brown said he would yank the province from the Western Climate Initiative bloc that works on joint strategies to reduce greenhouse gases.

"We would want to exit from this framework as quickly as possible," he told reporters. He said the party's policy advisory committee is examining the legal implications.

The comments from Brown, who has, instead, promised a carbon tax (www.thestar.com) the Liberal government says would be more expensive than its cap-and-trade program, could have an impact as companies decide how much to bid on carbon credits in the auction, which takes place from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Fuming about a new radio advertising blitz (www.thestar.com) by the provincial government promoting the cut in hydro rates of 25 per cent, Brown vowed to restore the auditor general's power to veto government advertising.

While former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty gave the auditor supreme oversight of such ads in 2004 to eliminate partisan messaging at taxpayer expense, his successor Kathleen Wynne watered down (www.thestar.com) those regulations in 2015.

"I absolutely feel it should be strengthened again," said Brown, who has complained the hydro ads are in contempt of the legislature because MPPs have not yet voted on legislation to implement Liberal's plan to cut rates.

"There's a reason they stripped the auditor general of the powers to review (government advertising). This is an abuse of taxpayer dollars. These are partisan ads."

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said her party would "absolutely" restore the auditor general's powers over advertising.

"There's a practically invisible line between the Liberals' partisan activities and their governing."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault has defended the ads, saying it's legitimate to let citizens know their hydro bills will be going down this summer.

With files from Kristin Rushowy

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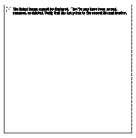

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Provinces considering carbon pricing watch Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction; Ontario set for first cap-and-trade auction

Canadian Press - Tue Mar 21 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario's cap-and-trade system aimed at lowering greenhouse gas emissions begins in earnest Wednesday with its first auction, which other provinces said they will be watching closely as they consider their own carbon pricing plans.

The provincial Liberal government hopes the auction - held every three months - will bring in $1.9 billion a year, or $8 billion by the end of 2020, to be invested in programs that reduce emissions and help businesses and consumers adapt to a low-carbon economy.

Under the plan, businesses will have limits - or caps - on the amount of pollution they can emit. Companies that exceed those limits, which will be reduced each year, can buy permits or allowances through auctions or from other companies that come in under their limits.

The cap-and-trade system, which came into effect Jan. 1, added 4.3 cents per litre to the price of gasoline and about $80 a year to natural gas home heating costs, in addition to indirect costs that will be passed onto consumers.

The Opposition Progressive Conservatives have been critical of those added costs and party leader Patrick Brown said Tuesday he would instead bring in a "revenue negative" carbon tax, with which any increased costs to consumers would be more than offset by tax cuts.

A government-commissioned analysis showed that a carbon tax would achieve more emission reductions - almost half through businesses leaving Ontario - but cost more, and an unlinked cap-and-trade model would be the most expensive option.

Ontario plans to link its cap-and-trade system with a joint Quebec-California market next year. But when that happens, an estimated $466 million will leave the Ontario economy over three years, because it will be cheaper to buy allowances in those jurisdictions, the auditor general has said. Both the environmental commissioner and the auditor have said that means greenhouse gas emissions won't actually be cut in Ontario.

The most recent Quebec-California joint cap-and-trade auction saw just 18 per cent of allowances sold, with previous results of 88 per cent, 35 per cent and 11 per cent.

Since 2014, the linked market has sold 74 per cent of its credits at auction.

Ontario Environment Minister Glen Murray couldn't comment on his province's expected results so close to the auction, but has previously said he didn't think Ontario's market would see the same problem of oversupply, because the number of available allowances will decline at a more aggressive rate.

Ontario is capping emission allowances at roughly 142 megatonnes this year, declining about four per cent each year to 2020, when the Liberals hope to have achieved a 15-per-cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels.

As the emissions cap declines, the government hopes companies have more incentive to invest in technologies that cut their emissions.

Carbon market expert Nicolas Girod said he expects the first auction to be close to fully subscribed. However, some businesses may sit this one out and some may be waiting until the market is linked with the California-Quebec one, he said.

"There will be…excess allowances in California, so they may be cautious about buying in this first auction, or they may not be willing to buy (at) too high a price in this first auction because they know that there will be excess allowances from California coming next year," said Girod, responsible for trading and research at Clear Blue Markets.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said all provinces must set up a cap-and-trade system or impose a price on carbon of at least $10 per tonne starting next year. In Ontario, the floor price on carbon is expected to be set for auctions at between $17.50 and $18 per tonne, though demand could push the price higher.

Provinces without a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system are weighing their options and some say they will be closely watching Ontario's results.

Nova Scotia's Liberal government is proposing a cap-and-trade system but isn't currently planning to link its market. It is opting instead for trading of credits among emitters within the province and proposing to not make polluters pay the full cost for the greenhouse gas emissions that are over the capped limits.

Jason Hollett, the executive director of Noca Scotia's climate change division, said the plan is to distribute credits "for free" to carbon emitters, because the province has already met Ottawa's targeted emission requirements due to changes to its electricity generation.

Most large emitters in Ontario will receive allowances for free until 2020, which the government says is meant to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing.

Newfoundland and Labrador will watch what happens in Ontario and may consider a cap-and-trade system in the future, said Perry Trimper, the minister responsible for the office of Climate Change. Emissions caps are being set in that province and emitters who go over them will be required to invest in a low-carbon technology fund being run by the government, or find ways to reduce their emissions.

"I must say I'm hoping for the best for them and we see an opportunity in the future to join jurisdictions like Ontario and Quebec in a cap-and-trade system," Trimper said.

Ontario's results will be made public on April 3.

- With files from Michael Tutton.

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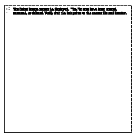

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Energy minister rejects Hardeman's criticisms; Glenn Thibeault slams provincial Tories for not offering their own plan to reduce electricity costs

Tillsonburg News - Wed Mar 22 2017
Byline: Bruce Chessell
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Ontario's energy minister offered his own criticism of the province's Progressive Conservative, responding Thursday to comments made by local Oxford MPP Ernie Hardeman.

In a statement provided to the Sentinel-Review, Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault said the PCs have been eager to criticize his government's proposed hydro plan but have offered no plan of their own - or any ideas - that would help lower electricity costs.

"While our plan provides substantial, wide-spread and longlasting relief that will have an immediate impact on peoples' lives, MPP Hardeman and the PCs have yet to bring forward anything credible," Thibeault said. "One of their criticisms - halting the broadening of Hydro One - won't take one cent of electricity bills. And their push to rip up energy contracts would lead to increased rates, lawsuits and penalties."

Through Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, Thibeault said the provincial government is cutting electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families starting this summer, as well as about half-a-million farms and small businesses.

"It is the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, with rates also held to inflation for the next four years," he said. "Our plan is about real relief for Ontarians and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system."

Hardeman said he was unimpressed with the provincial Liberal governments proposed Fair Hydro Plan earlier this week, adding the solution being proposed was to just defer costs for hydro to the future.

The proposed plan was introduced recently by the provincial liberal government and will ultimately give an average of 25 per cent off electricity bills for households, farms and small businesses. This target is going to be reached, however, by paying the costs of the electricity generation contracts over longer periods, which will mean higher interest fees down the road.

But in an interview with the Sentinel-Review, Hardeman said the government has to look at the root cause as to why hydro prices are so high.

"One of the main ones is, of course, the Green Energy Act, which is putting a lot of the cost of the hydro that they're paying for and putting it into the global adjustment pot and trying to pay for it that way," Hardeman said. "If they don't look at how we got into this mess and solve that problem, obviously the mess is going to keep growing as time goes on."

According to the MOE, the Fair Hydro Plan will enhance lowincome support (OESP) and some customers could see as much as a 40 to 50 per cent reduction in their electricity bill. bchessell@postmedia.com

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