

Message

From: John Cannella [/O=IMO/OU=EXTERNAL
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Sent: 2017-03-30 6:29:37 AM
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Today's News

powered by:

Date: Thursday, March 30, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

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Ontario's Award-Winning Utilities Demonstrate Value of Local Electricity Services

Targeted News Service - Tue Mar 28 2017 Page: n/a

The Electricity Distributors Association issued the following news release: Ontario's award-winning utilities demonstrate value of local electricity services Top-performing electricity utilities from across Ontario were honoured on March ...

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About 2/3 of promised 500 electric vehicle charging stations installed; Ontario misses electric car charging target

Canadian Press - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline:Allison Jones

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Electric vehicle charging network will be only 2-thirds complete by Friday deadline, province says

CBC.CA News - Wed Mar 29 2017, 4:39pm ET
Byline:CBC News

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PCs step up fight against government advertising in wake of hydro rate cut ads

thestar.com - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline:Rob Ferguson

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Platt: When it comes to hydro, only some polls really matter to the Ontario government

ottawacitizen.com - Wed Mar 29 2017
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Oshawa This Week - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline:Brad Duguid

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NDP critical of Sudbury Liberal MPP Thibeault

Sudbury Star - Thu Mar 30 2017 Page: A3

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Wind still fills sails of Wynne arrogance

Owen Sound Sun Times - Thu Mar 30 2017

Byline:Peter Epp

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Byline:Valerie Macdonald

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Byline:Julie Kotsis, Windsor Star

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Byline:Stephen Petrick

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Ontario's Award-Winning Utilities Demonstrate Value of Local Electricity Services

Targeted News Service - Tue Mar 28 2017 Page: n/a

The Electricity Distributors Association issued the following news release:

Ontario's award-winning utilities demonstrate value of local electricity services Top-performing electricity utilities from across Ontario were honoured on March 27th at the industry's premier Awards Gala, hosted by the Electricity Distributors Association (EDA).

"In tune with the needs of their customers and communities, Ontario's local electricity utilities have pushed forward on many game-changing initiatives that have, and will continue to, deliver exceptional service to customers amid significant system transformation," says Vinay Sharma, Chair of the EDA. "We are proud of the many achievements that our member utilities have accomplished."

Receiving the award for overall Performance Excellence - sponsored by Ontario Power Generation, was Veridian Connections. A respected leader in innovation, operational excellence and customer service, Veridian boosted its overall performance score to 97.4 per cent according to its Service Quality Composite Index. Veridian also achieved 1.5 million hours worked without a lost-time injury, exceeded its energy savings target and set aside \$2 per customer (or \$225,000 in 2016) for community sponsorships and donations.

London Hydro was recognized with the Conservation Leadership Award - sponsored by the Independent Electricity System Operator. The utility created a turnkey solution to help confront energy poverty in the city by providing over 50,000 lighting and 700 appliance retrofits and upgrades to more than 3,000 social housing dwellings. The program is saving tenants and the London & Middlesex Housing Corporation about \$450,000 per year.

Essex Powerlines and Collus PowerStream's joint Digital Grid 2.0 project earned the Innovation Excellence Award. Leveraging the latest in utility software, the two companies fused different operating systems through the same universal platform, resulting in improved reliability and service. With built-in capabilities to support the adoption and integration of new technologies, this forward-thinking project is preparing the local grids and customers for the future of electricity distribution.

Burlington Hydro received the newly launched Public Electrical Safety Excellence Award - sponsored by the Electrical Safety Authority, for its "Power to be Safe" program. Integrating both new and existing programs, such as Rob Ellis' MySafeWork and the Creative Kids Contest - which engaged students in grades 4-8 to design a safety-themed ad, helped teach important electrical safety lessons to people of all ages.

Festival Hydro, London Hydro and Whitby Hydro received the award for Customer

Service Excellence for collaborating to enhance their online customer engagement solutions. This included launching Green Button - a standard, easy-to-use platform for customers to access and take charge of their energy usage data. By working together, these utilities reduced their costs while providing their customers with more service options online.

Hydro Ottawa was recognized with the Communications Excellence award for successfully driving customer engagement and raising community awareness of the value of the utility's services through a comprehensive social media and video content strategy. Hydro Ottawa made use of live-streaming services and drone footage to engage their customers in real time.

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About 2/3 of promised 500 electric vehicle charging stations installed; Ontario misses electric car charging target

Canadian Press - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario's Liberal government will miss its self-imposed deadline of the end of this month to have a network of nearly 500 electric vehicle charging stations up and running.

Ministry of Transportation officials say about two-thirds of the stations will be live by Friday.

The government made the commitment last year, but has run into a few problems with about one-third of the network, said Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca.

"Some of our partners have experienced delays with respect to some of the permitting processes that are required, some technical adjustments that weren't anticipated, so they're all working hard, the ministry is in fairly regular contact with them and we anticipate that the balance of those chargers will be in place by the fall," he said.

Ontario is putting \$20 million into the charging stations to help address so-called range anxiety, an often-cited barrier to people purchasing electric vehicles because they worry about the distance the vehicle can travel.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said she's not surprised the government didn't meet its target.

"You shouldn't be making these promises if you can't fulfil them, that's the bottom line," she said. "Let's be realistic with what you're able to achieve."

The Progressive Conservative transportation critic didn't waste an opportunity, when asked about the charging stations, to make mention of more bad electric vehicle optics.

"I think the focus for (Premier) Kathleen Wynne was handing out \$14,000 rebates to owners of Teslas, while they really should have been focusing their time and energy on ensuring that the infrastructure for electric vehicles has actually been rolled out," said Michael Harris.

"I think the No. 1 thing that people ask when they buy an electric vehicle is, 'Am I going to get from A to B and is there infrastructure out there to allow me to do that?'"

The government introduced maximum rebates for electric vehicles last year, but in February it removed a \$3,000 cap for vehicles that cost between \$75,000 and \$150,000. That means that buyers of vehicles in that price range, such as new Tesla models, are now entitled to the full rebates of up to \$14,000 - the same rebates available to lower-cost electric vehicles.

The almost 500 charging stations planned for the province include about 300 Level 2 chargers, which fully power up a vehicle in about four to six hours, and about 200 Level 3 chargers, which charge a vehicle to 80 per cent in about half an hour.

Del Duca said a map on the ministry's website showing where the charging stations are installed should be updated in the next few days.

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Electric vehicle charging network will be only 2-thirds complete by Friday deadline, province says

CBC.CA News - Wed Mar 29 2017, 4:39pm ET
Byline: CBC News

The Ontario government admitted Wednesday that it will fall short of meeting its deadline this Friday of creating a network of 485 electric vehicle charging stations in 250 locations across the province, and it's blaming unforeseen problems for the delay.

"We know some of our partners have encountered difficulties around permitting and some of the technical aspects of having some of the chargers up and running," said Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca.

- Ontario building nearly 500 electric vehicle charging stations

- Skeptical motorists, shortage of charging stations the biggest obstacles in Ontario's electric car plan

Two-thirds of the network will be live on Friday with the rest of the stations expected to be up and running by fall, according to the Ministry of Transportation.

"Each of our partners' individual charging stations are subject to different site conditions, land ownership, municipal permitting, electrical grid limitations and other factors which have influenced timelines," said Bob Nichols, senior media liaison officer for the Transportation Ministry, in a statement.

Because the stations are located in various community centres, retail outlets and other public spaces, Del Duca said the government's public and private sector partners are facing challenges in obtaining permits but are "motivated to get it right."

Horwath not surprised

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said she's not surprised the government didn't meet its target.

"You shouldn't be making these promises if you can't fulfil them, that's the bottom line," she said. "Let's be realistic with what you're able to achieve."

Progressive Conservative transportation critic Michael Harris suggested the Liberals don't have their priorities straight when it comes to electric vehicles.

"I think the focus for Kathleen Wynne was handing out \$14,000 rebates to owners of Teslas, while they really should have been focusing their time and energy on ensuring that the infrastructure for electric vehicles has actually been rolled out," Harris said.

Covering every corner

Del Duca said the ministry has seen "some fairly tremendous success" despite the delays but that there have been a few challenges in building a network that ranges across the province.

"We definitely want to make sure we're building a network that covers every corner of Ontario. Yes, we have some challenges and we are slightly delayed," the minister said.

"We anticipate being able to provide more resources in the coming months to continue to deploy an even broader network of charging infrastructure, including in northern Ontario."

Del Duca said a map on the ministry's website showing where the charging stations are installed should be updated in the next few days.

Premier Wynne committed to building a charging network for electric vehicles across Ontario at the 2015 climate change talks in Paris.

The \$20 million in funding for the charging stations comes from Ontario's \$325 million Green Investment Fund, which supports projects that fight climate change.

With files from Canadian Press

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PCs step up fight against government advertising in wake of hydro rate cut ads

thestar.com - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline: Rob Ferguson

The Progressive Conservatives are stepping up the fight (www.thestar.com) against the Wynne government's radio ads about a promised 25 per cent cut to skyrocketing hydro rates this summer.

Deputy PC Leader Sylvia Jones has introduced a private members' bill that would restore Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk's power (www.thestar.com) to veto government ads if they are judged to be partisan.

Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberal administration "gutted" that veto power in 2015, turning the auditor into "little more than a rubber stamp," Jones told a news conference Wednesday.

"If the Liberal party wants to spend money promoting their policies, have at it," she said. "But this is taxpayers' money that should be going to important issues."

Energy Minister Glen Thibeault has said less than \$1 million has been spent on the radio and social media ad campaign so far, but more ads are planned.

Jones said the money would be better spent on ads warning people about the deadly opioid and fentanyl crisis that is resulting in overdoses among drug users or telling Ontarians how to recognize signs young women have been victimized by human traffickers.

Former premier Dalton McGuinty brought in the Government Advertising Act in 2004 to make sure partisan ads that had appeared during the preceding Progressive Conservative administration could not be repeated.

But by 2015, some Liberals were saying privately that the law and auditor's veto was too strict (www.thestar.com) and tied the government hands.

Changes were brought in defining an ad as partisan if it contains the name, voice or image of a member of cabinet or an MPP - unless the primary audience for the ad is outside Ontario.

Ads also cannot contain the name or logo of a recognized political party or "to a significant degree, a colour associated with the governing party, unless the item commonly appears in that colour."

New Democrats have joined Conservatives in criticizing the ads, saying they are improper for two reasons — because the government has not yet introduced legislation on the hydro rate cut, and because they are promotional.

It's not "get your flu shot" or "be a donor" of your organs at death, said Jones, who noted the government ads have been running in conjunction with flyers the Liberals have handed out boasting of the rate cuts.

Wynne defended the ads during an appearance at a west-end high school

Wednesday morning, saying they are important to "make sure that people know" about the pending hydro rate cut.

The ads also point citizens to a government web site where they can learn about other programs to help low-income people with more assistance on their hydro bills.

While the private members' bill by Jones is unlikely to pass, she reiterated a promise

party leader Patrick Brown made last week that a PC government would restore the auditor general's veto powers if elected in June 2018.

New Democrat Leader Andrea Horwath has pledged to do the same.

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Platt: When it comes to hydro, only some polls really matter to the Ontario government

ottawacitizen.com - Wed Mar 29 2017

Byline: Brian Platt

Hey, remember the Hydro One sale?

It's kind of fallen off the radar these days with all the hubbub over electricity rates, but this was the incredibly controversial decision by Premier Kathleen Wynne to effectively privatize the province's transmission utility, gradually selling 60 per cent of it.

(For those of you keeping score at home of controversial Ontario Liberal electricity decisions, this one comes after the Green Energy Act, and after the gas plants cancellation, but before the refinancing of the global adjustment.)

We always knew the government's handling of the electricity file has been unpopular, but The Canadian Press has gotten its hands on years of internal government polling, and it shows just how bad the damage has been.

As far back as December 2013, 70 per cent of Ontarians said the government was on the wrong track with electricity prices. On Hydro One it was even worse: a 2014 poll found just 25 per cent of the public supported selling it. These numbers have barely moved since then.

It raises some interesting questions about how Wynne's government makes decisions in the face of bad poll numbers. In particular: Why was the government willing to go forward with its Hydro One sell-off, but capitulated completely on electricity prices?

It's worth remembering why Hydro One was put on the auction block. The government wanted money to build infrastructure, but borrowing all of it was out of the question given the province's massive debt load. To get the cash, it essentially chose selling Hydro One shares over raising taxes (or a pseudo-tax, such as highway tolls). That's part of it right there: privatizing Hydro One was likely an easier sell than a tax raise.

But I think there's a bigger factor at play as well.

If any party was going to benefit from the Hydro One privatization, it should have been the NDP. The Progressive Conservatives have gamely pretended they passionately oppose the Hydro One sale, but any voter motivated about protecting Crown assets would be bonkers to shift their vote to the PCs, who tried to sell off Hydro One the last time they formed government.

But the NDP have gotten zero traction from this. Their vote share hasn't moved in five byelections, and polls consistently show them in third place or barely in second.

When someone is asked if they support selling Hydro One, they're likely to say no. But do they really care enough to change their vote? If you picked 100 people in a shopping mall in Ottawa or Toronto, how many could tell you what Hydro One even does?

When Wynne decided to sell a chunk of Hydro One - which remains the single boldest decision she's made since the election - she gambled that it wouldn't be a ballot box issue for voters. And I think she was right.

She holds it up now as an example of courage in leadership. During Tuesday's question period, PC leader Patrick Brown demanded to know why she ignored the internal polls on Hydro One. "If the leader of the Opposition is saying to me, 'Premier, why don't you just govern according to the polls?', I think that gives us an insight into the political methodology that he ascribes to," Wynne responded, which is a pretty good burn.

But let's not get carried away with Wynne's bravery. On electricity prices, she didn't just provide relief to the rural residents who really needed it - she brought in hugely expensive across-the-board rate cuts that we'll still be paying off decades down the road.

The key difference, of course, is that people were ready to change their votes on this issue. After losing the Scarborough byelection last summer, Wynne explicitly blamed hydro rates; we see now that the internal polling data was making that clear. She may not govern according to every poll, but when a poll matters to her election chances, the government suddenly moves with astonishing determination.

Brian Platt is the deputy digital editor for the Ottawa Citizen. Previously, he was based at Queen's Park as a policy reporter.

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MPP defends government actions on hydro bills

Oshawa This Week - Wed Mar 29 2017

Byline:Brad Duguid

MPP Jennifer French wrote an op-ed last week that overlooked some important facts about our government's plan to cut hydro rates by 25 per cent on average for all households. What MPP French and I agree on is that immediate hydro rate relief is needed for families and businesses across the Durham Region. Hydro is a necessity. We have heard from people struggling to deal with bills that have gone up too much and too quickly. Household budgets are stretched and something needed to be done.

This is why Premier Kathleen Wynne announced a plan on March 2 that will lower residential hydro bills by an average of 25 per cent starting this summer. And bills will stay down, with any increases kept at the rate of inflation for at least four years. It is the largest residential hydro rate cut in the province's history.

The NDP say they have a plan, but their plan has been widely panned since its release, offering nothing practical or substantial when it comes to reducing electricity costs for Ontario families and businesses. Their plan relies on asking the federal government for help, and future expert panels. We know that Durham residents need hydro relief now.

This is why, starting this summer, every household that pays for electricity in the Durham Region will see this rate cut with no asterisks, loop holes or exceptions. Unlike the NDP's proposal, this plan will actually reduce hydro bills.

MPP French and the Ontario NDP also continue to ignore the reality that previous governments of all stripes neglected to invest in Ontario's electricity system. The grid was old and fragile, and dirty coal plants caused smog alerts and system brownouts. Perhaps the NDP and PCs have forgotten the 2003 summer blackout that swept the province? Our government has not.

The Liberal government made rebuilding our aging and neglected infrastructure a priority. We closed all of Ontario's coal plants, built new transmission lines and invested in renewable energy. We now have a clean, reliable system that is going to benefit us for decades. But these major investments came at a cost.

A cost that a single generation of Ontario ratepayers is carrying on its shoulders. That's not entirely fair, since these investments will benefit Ontarians for decades to come. And so, like the mortgage on your house, we're refinancing it and setting a new term that stretches over a longer period - which reflects the use of the infrastructure more fairly.

We can afford to bring bills down because of Ontario's strong economy, which led Canada and the G7 in growth last year. We've created over 700,000 net new jobs since the recession and our unemployment rate is at an eight-year low. After a decade of deficits, the provincial budget will be balanced this year.

Together, we have ensured cleaner air and a reliable energy system for our children. And now we can offer meaningful cuts to hydro bills that will help make life more affordable for years to come.

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NDP critical of Sudbury Liberal MPP Thibeault

Sudbury Star - Thu Mar 30 2017 Page: A3

The provincial NDP have criticized Glenn Thibeault, Liberal MPP for Sudbury and minister of energy, for voting against their plan to cut hydro bills by 30 per cent, as well as his support for the privatization of Hydro One.

"Everyday families, businesses, municipalities and hospitals are hurting from the Wynne government's sky-high hydro bills," NDP leader Andrea Horwath said in a release. "But, once again, the Wynne Liberals are focused on Premier Wynne and the Liberal party - not what Ontario people need."

The vote was on an NDP motion, "Addressing the Root Causes of High Hydro Costs," that would have reduced hydro bills for businesses and families by up to 30 per cent. The plan includes eliminating mandatory time-of-use pricing, ending unfair

rural delivery charges, and fixing problems in the system like oversupply and exporting power to other jurisdictions at a loss.

The motion would have adopted the NDP's hydro plan and includes reversing the privatization of Hydro One. That move would pay for itself, and bring in an additional \$7 billion in revenue to reinvest in Ontario, the NDP said.

Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government has announced their own plan to reduce residential hydro bills, the Fair Hydro Plan, which proposes to give residential consumers an average of a 25 per cent cut on their energy bills - when factoring in the eight per cent reduction implemented Jan. 1 - by refinancing over a longer period a portion of the global adjustment charge.

The plan also includes additional reductions for low-income and rural consumers, as well as savings for many small businesses and farms.

"The cost of electricity has gone up over 300 per cent under the Liberal government, including 50 per cent just since Premier Wynne took office," Horwath said. "Instead of taking a serious look at the NDP's comprehensive and achievable plan, Wynne is musing about borrowing and sticking the next generation with as much as \$40 billion in interest to buy some pre-election political relief for herself and her party. We're all going to pay for that, one way or another.

"And she's still planning to continue the disastrous selloff of Hydro one. She's still planning to charge time-of-use premiums that punish parents for cooking dinner at dinner time and seniors for staying home during the day. Not only does her approach fail to address the mess the Liberal and Conservative governments made of our hydro system - it drives us further in the wrong direction - including by selling off even more of Hydro One." sud.editorial@sunmedia.ca

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Wind still fills sails of Wynne arrogance

Owen Sound Sun Times - Thu Mar 30 2017

Byline: Peter Epp

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Only in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario would we still be spending money we don't have, to build wind farms few people want, to generate electricity we don't need.

And yet that's exactly what's happening six months after the government halted its green energy policy. Planning for five new wind turbine developments continues despite admission from the Wynne government that Ontario won't use the electricity these turbines will generate.

Indeed, if history is any indication, the excess electricity generated from turbines yet to be built will be sold at a steep discount, probably to American states that already offer electricity cheaper than Ontario's, states that in some cases are using cheap electricity to lure away Ontario business.

The Ontario government says it's contractually obligated to allow the last of these wind turbine developers to bring their plans to fruition. A sensible response would be to cancel the contracts and pay whatever legal penalties might follow. But no, the Wynne government will stoically follow through.

Never mind that her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, had no such qualms about cancelling natural gas-generation plants in Mississauga and Oakville, a move Ontario's auditor-general said cost taxpayers approximately \$1 billion. That cancellation came after the residents of those cities levied concerns about the gas plant's location.

It's interesting how they listened so carefully in 2011 to the concerns of Mississauga and Oakville, yet have been deaf to the pleas of rural communities where wind turbines are being developed.

Consider Dutton Dunwich. As with approximately 100 other municipalities in the province, the Elgin County community is an "unwilling host" to wind turbines. To further buttress its opposition Dutton Dunwich in 2014 became the first Ontario municipality to hold a referendum on the issue. Over half of its voters participated, with 84 per cent voting against wind farms.

At a March 22 demonstration, at an open house held by the wind company that wants to build upwards of 19 turbines in Dutton Dunwich, a representative of a group opposed to the project said: "As a democratic society we voted in opposition to this (project) and yet here we are still fighting them. ... it doesn't seem to matter that we don't want (the turbines)."

Wynne would do well to heed that comment. But the green energy policy has from the beginning specifically ignored local councils and residents. The arrogance of that position remains on display even as these last turbines are prepared to be built.

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Neighbour surprised by new solar farm

Northumberland Today.com - Wed Mar 29 2017

Byline:Valerie Macdonald

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Ryan Armstrong commutes from his Woodvale School Road property north of Port Hope, and west of Rice Lake, to build elevators in downtown Toronto.

The 28-acres are home to chickens just now, but Armstrong, who says he bought the property late last year, wants to add beef cattle and possibly pigs.

Armstrong said he was shocked, therefore, when he received a notice last month from Rensola in Mississauga, just three months after purchasing his property, that a solar farm was going up on the other side of the road. That's about 400 feet from his house, he said.

"Our municipality (Port Hope) didn't even know," Armstrong said. "They knew when we got the same notification on Feb. 21."

This lack of information, which he says his real estate company didn't have either, is just one of a host of issues he has with the provincial Green Energy Act and the way planning authority governing solar and wind farms is at the provincial, and not the local government level.

Armstrong says he is going to the public meeting this Thursday at the municipal

office in Canton (6 to 8 p.m.) where both Municipality of Port Hope and Rensola representatives will be there to answer questions from residents.

His list of questions covers a wide range of items including: what kind of noise restrictions will be in place to deal with the step-up transformer and string inverters along the roadside (that change the electrical current DC to AC, he says, and that can give off a hum that is "almost mind numbing"); how are new property owners, and existing ones, to know about projects before they get approved, as well as afterwards; how can projects be deemed green when the solar panels he says Rensola's parent company manufactures in China, use coal power in their manufacturing process; what about the green aspect of some of the components of the solar panels themselves; and does the company know how neighbours around the project actual "feel" about the contract that has been awarded to Rensola to construct a 500-kilowatt ground-mount installation at 6339 Ganaraska Road, and that their concerns range from reduced property values and loss of views to health-related and other concerns.

Rensola, in a previous interview, indicated it would speak with anyone who contacted them at their Mississauga location and were happy to do so, even before Thursday's public information. With this solar farm going up right across the road, Armstrong says he "can't help but feel my little bit of paradise has been taken away." vmacdonald@postmedia.com [Twitter.com/NT_vmacdonald](https://twitter.com/NT_vmacdonald)

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Concerns raised over Hydro One tree cutting in LaSalle

Windsor Star - Wed Mar 29 2017
Byline: Julie Kotsis, Windsor Star

LaSalle Mayor Ken Antaya has vowed to do whatever it takes to protect a wooded area that cost the town \$3 million to preserve.

"I don't care if we have to chain somebody to a bulldozer, we're going to do it because that area is too important to us," Antaya said following a presentation to town council by a representative from Hydro One outlining plans for "emergency vegetation maintenance" along the area's transmission corridor.

Jake Zink, a forestry supervisor with Hydro One, told councillors up to 65 trees need to be removed along the transmission line which stretches two-kilometres from Brunet Park off Normandy Road to Todd Lane.

Zink called it a "serious hazard" and said the work has to be done immediately, although he said the area is on a six-year maintenance cycle and work was last done in 2010.

"This work in April is strictly to target these danger trees that have to come out, they are a public safety concern," Zink said.

In his report, Zink said some vegetation has reached heights that pose an "imminent risk to the overhead power lines," and if left untreated, may cause a power outage. Additionally, the dense vegetation is "impeding access for crews to conduct on-going maintenance work or emergency repairs."

Hydro line towers are shown at Brunet Park in LaSalle on Wednesday, March 29,

2017. The town is concerned about Hydro One's plan to clear cut the environmentally significant woodlot for maintenance work.

A sign warning "Do Not Cut" is shown at Brunet Park in LaSalle on Wednesday, March 29, 2017. The town is concerned about Hydro One's plan to clear cut the environmentally significant woodlot for maintenance work.

Antaya said he's skeptical and worried the utility plans to go ahead and clear cut the area and create a meadow in the wake, something he was told last summer by a representative of the utility.

"I'm still concerned that once they get there they're going to say, 'Oops, my saw slipped,' and everything is gone," he said. "(They're) saying this is an emergency measure. An emergency to me is something that occurs very suddenly. This is not sudden. This is something that's been happening for years. All of a sudden now it's becoming an emergency."

Antaya asked Zink for a report clearly outlining what trees are to be cut down before the work starts and has instructed town staff to report any activity in the wood lot.

"We made a big commitment out there," he said. "We spent over \$3 million purchasing and to compile that property so that we could preserve it and ... we don't want it destroyed by any agency, including Hydro One."

Antaya said he hopes Hydro One will look at ways that will "cause the least disturbance and maintain the integrity of that environmentally significant area."

jkotsis@postmedia.com(mailto:jkotsis@postmedia.com)

twitter.com/JulieKotsis (twitter.com)

A cyclist is shown riding through Brunet Park in LaSalle, on Wednesday, March 29, 2017. The town is concerned about Hydro One's plan to clear cut the environmentally significant woodlot for maintenance work.

A hydro towers is shown at Brunet Park in LaSalle on Wednesday, March 29, 2017. The town is concerned about Hydro One's plan to clear cut the environmentally significant woodlot for maintenance work.

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MPP Todd Smith nearly expelled from legislature

Brighton Independent - Thu Mar 30 2017
Byline: Stephen Petrick
Page: B3

Prince Edward-Hastings Member of Provincial Parliament Todd Smith was ejected from the Ontario legislature and nearly expelled altogether after storming out of his seat during a heated debate on Tuesday, March 21.

MPPs were once again discussing hydro issues and Opposition charges that the governing Liberals are using taxpayers' money to fund advertising campaigns.

The campaign speaks to a new program that will allow Ontarians rebates on energy

costs; Progressive Conservatives suggest it's really a Liberal advertising campaign for the next election.

Smith, energy critic for the Opposition Progressive Conservative Party, grew so embroiled in the shouting he was ejected from the Legislature by the speaker.

It was then that Smith crossed the line to nearly being expelled from the entire current session of the Legislature, a ban that would oust him from the chamber until June. A visibly animated Smith left his seat and charged into the centre aisle of the legislative chamber.

A news clip aired by CTV Toronto showed him repeatedly jabbing his finger at Liberal MPPs - but there was no audio of what Smith was bellowing.

The Legislature's sergeant at arms quickly stepped up to Smith and escorted him from the chambers. The Speaker, David Levac, sternly admonished Smith and warned other MPPs that such actions were beyond acceptable behavior in the legislative chamber.

Upon Smith's ejection, Levac said, angrily, "the member might not have known it, but he was very close to being expelled."

As the Legislature fell into hushed silence, Levac continued, "That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this house. That goes for anybody. It's disrespectful."

In a phone interview with the Belleville News from his Queen's Park office the next day, Smith said he sent a note to Levac to apologize for his behavior.

However, he said he doesn't feel he owes Ontarians, or his constituents in particular, any apology for his actions.

"No, certainly not," he said. "I promised to be their voice at Queen's Park. From what I'm hearing from residents in my riding, they're angry. I hear anger."

He said the high emotions experienced Tuesday are a reflection of the tension in Ontario, where high energy rates are hurting residents and businesses.

When asked to describe how the heated exchange started, he said, "the minister of energy (Glenn Thibeault) was not backing down on claims that this is not a good idea to spend that money (on advertising). To me it was the same old, same old. It's very frustrating."

When asked if he broke protocol by leaving his seat and walking into the middle aisle, Smith said, deadpan, "no, that's the way out."

He downplayed the seriousness of the ejection, saying that the sergeant of arms didn't have to physically remove him.

"I wasn't handcuffed," Smith said. He was also asked whether him being expelled until June would have been a disservice to constituents, to which he responded with "Oh, yes, certainly, but that didn't happen."

As the newly named energy critic, Smith is in a high-profile role for his party now, as electricity rates are expected to be a major issue in the 2018 provincial election. Earlier this week Smith's office worked on a Progressive Conservative motion to

suggest that the Liberals were in contempt in parliament for running the advertising campaign.

It hinges on the argument that the hydro rebate program is being advertised, even though it hasn't been officially approved in Parliament yet. (However, because the Liberals have a majority government, there's no doubt it will eventually be approved.)

"Tensions are high at Queen's Park these days," Smith said. "It appears we're in election mode."

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