

John Bozzo

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Subject: FW: QP Briefing: Premier mulls using tax dollars to pay hydro delivery charge

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Subject: QP Briefing: Premier mulls using tax dollars to pay hydro delivery charge

Premier mulls using tax dollars to pay hydro delivery charge

19.01.2017 Jessica Smith Cross 0
 QP Briefing

Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a speech to a business crowd in Toronto Thursday — and teased a major potential change to electricity bills with an anecdote about meeting a retiree from the Ottawa Valley named Lloyd.

In the speech, Wynne said she's committed to instituting new measures to deal with high hydro rates soon and specifically noted Ontarians' complaints about high delivery charges on their bill. And afterwards, she confirmed her government is considering moving costs, such as the delivery charge, from Ontarians' hydro bills, to government coffers.

Wynne said she's been setting aside time for people who've written her letters about their electricity bills, including Lloyd, a retiree on a fixed income.

"He saw that energy prices were going up here, like they are all over the continent, so he found the money to install some new, energy-efficient windows. Still, he's gobsmacked by his hydro bill every month. With delivery charges making up 50 per cent of his bill, Lloyd feels like he's being punished for his efforts. Lloyd has every right to be angry."

"At the end of the day, what people like Lloyd should be paying for is the electricity they use. It is why I have committed to finding more ways to lower rates and reduce the burden on consumers in the weeks and months ahead — work that is well underway. I am listening to the people of the province and it is the right thing to do," said Wynne.

After the speech, Wynne took questions from the media. She said the delivery charge is a frequent target of hydro-related complaints she hears.

"There have been decisions made about what would be paid on the rate base, in other words, what would go on people's electricity bills, and what would be paid out of general revenue, government revenue. We have to look at whether we've got that balance right as well," she said.

"When I say we have to look at the delivery charge, that's exactly what I mean," she continued. "The delivery charge is an example of the kind of thing that we have to — we really have to pull that apart and make sure that there's a fairness across the province in terms of the cost that people are bearing."

Wynne declined to offer more details, such as if a delivery charge shift is the only change she's considering making, saying she wouldn't "scoop" herself, and that her government hasn't made those decisions quite yet.

Last year, the Ontario Energy Board ruled that all utilities will move to fixed distribution rates for residential customers, which means that customers of the same utility pay the same distribution charge no matter how little or how much electricity they use. The distribution rate, along with transmission costs, are what makes up the delivery charge on a hydro bill.

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