

Gilbert Rioux

July 16, 2016

**The Honourable Glenn Thibeault**  
Minister of Energy  
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Dear Mr. Thibeault:

**Re: Hydro One**

I am a long-time resident of Ontario and a Hydro One customer. I have serious concerns about the rising rates Hydro One is charging its customers and everyone I speak with shares my views.

Hydro rates across this Province are not the same. Many people do not know this. The Government of Ontario is also forcing Hydro One customers to pay an unequal share of the province's debt. Most people do not know this either.

Hydro One is mismanaged and is fraught with corruption. Its practices are self-serving. Years of overspending and botched energy projects are being passed-off on current Hydro One customers who have no alternative but to deal with Hydro One. It has a monopoly over an essential service. The Government of Ontario sold part of the company and used the proceeds to fund infrastructure in Toronto whose residents are not even Hydro One customers. The Provincial Government's hands are dirty.

Hydro One customers will not put up with this any longer. It's time for serious change and I intend to do something about it.

#### **Rates Not In Line With Other Provinces, Uneven Across Ontario**

I have reviewed hydro invoices from Quebec and from Nova Scotia and compared the rates of those provinces to those of Hydro One. Hydro One customers pay 3.5 times the rates charged in Quebec for the same services, further, Quebec residents pay the same rates regardless of where they live. There is no surcharge for rural customers, no delivery charges. Not so in Ontario where rural users are charged a premium. Hydro One customers pay 2 times the rates charged in Nova Scotia, and I understand that Manitoba Hydro customers pay less still. How can the Government of Ontario justify forcing prices on its residents that so far exceed those of neighboring provinces?

We all pay the same taxes, we should all receive the same services. Since Hydro One customers are paying an unfair share of Provincial Government spending, every Hydro One customer should receive a percentage-based tax credit to offset these costs. Stop this lunacy of giving vouchers to low income earners and those who succeed in hiding their income. Your practices are unfair and encourage fraud. Every Hydro One customer is entitled to a rebate or tax credit.

### **Time-Of-Day Usage Billing**

Time-of-day pricing was clearly thought up by officials living in downtown Toronto high-rises, ignorant of life in the rest of the province. Now, instead of doing laundry during the day when we can use our clothes lines, we do laundry at night and throw it in the dryer. So much for conserving energy. This is just one silly example of why Torontonians should not be making decisions for the rest of the province.

### **Overpaid Hydro One Employees**

It is no secret that Hydro One workers, like all public sector employees, are grossly overpaid. It is high time their wages and benefits are brought in line with those working in the private sector. There is no justification for the amount of overtime (double time) that is being paid, or benefits such as \$3,800 laser eye surgery for girlfriends – yes, I can give you names. Regular tradesmen should not come close to making the sunshine list. They are not professionals – they have no professional oversight, no personal obligations or costs, no personal liability. They are just employees who go home at the end of their shifts, as are most public sector workers. This spending is unjustifiable in today's economic climate and it is evidence of gross mismanagement and worse, corruption.

### **Charging For Services Users Did Not Contract For**

I find it interesting that despite all of the steps I am taking to dramatically reduce my use of hydro that my bills keep increasing. I was particularly insulted when I received in the mail a letter from Hydro One purporting to tell me “how I am doing”. I did not agree to pay for this service and I am not interested in creating more Hydro One jobs. I also know exactly “how I am doing” since I pay my bills.

### **HST On Hydro**

This issue is now several years old, but Ontario residents have short memories, so I will remind them. The Government of Ontario hit all hydro customers when it began charging HST. I now pay an additional \$8 dollars for every \$100 I spend on hydro. This should be reversed immediately. For that matter, utilities should not be subject to *any* taxes.

### **Green Energy Programs – Not Green**

Wind turbines and solar panels are far from efficient. We cannot rely on an energy source that relies on weather. Further, everyone knows we would have to cover the globe in solar panels to produce enough energy to sustain Ontario. Solar panels and wind turbines are destroying the natural landscape of our province. They are an eyesore. Many complain of dizziness and other health problems caused by wind turbines. And where does the Government of Ontario intend to put all the solar panels once they are decommissioned? The contracts property owners have entered into with solar companies do not provide for a method of disposal. Does this mean these panels will all end up in local landfills in 20 years from now? Rest assured, in 20 years from now our children will not be happy picking up the cost.

What of electric cars? How is this going to work? Electric cars are not safe in northern climates, batteries don't work properly in the cold. And who will pay for the cost of road repairs? These vehicles weigh 3 times that of a regular car and don't pay fuel surcharges to cover road repairs. Does the Government of Ontario plan to stick Hydro One customers with this bill also?

The actual cost of green energy and what this means in dollars to the average taxpayer is never front-and-center on the Liberal Government's platform during election time. If it was, there would be a marked difference in the election outcome. Everyone supports the "idea" of green energy, but not so many support its cost. The Government of Ontario knows this, so it bombards us with media blitzes on how we all want green energy solutions. The Government treats us like brainless sheep and I regret to say that is true of many Ontarians, but not all of us are prone to brainwash. Many of us see through these underhanded tactics and we resent being treated like idiots.

If the province is really so concerned about our use of non-renewable energy, then influence social change starting with spending. We don't need a new sofa every 5 years. Most of us don't need cell phones but it seems every child now carries one. Stop purchasing foreign junk that lasts 2 or 3 years, and start buying local, start buying North American. Not only would it boost employment and our economy, there would also be much less waste and less personal debt. But let's be honest, the province will never support this idea, since it would have the parallel effect of slashing provincial sales tax revenues.

### **Green Jobs – Not At All**

The companies that manufacture solar and wind turbines are all foreign-owned. The general contractors erecting wind and solar farms are foreign-owned. The Province sends us coupons to purchase light bulbs and energy efficient items, all of which are made in China. Exactly which jobs are being created for Ontarians? The money is all being funneled out of Ontario.

### **Ombudsman Admits Hydro One Customers Are Paying Provincial Debt**

Recently I had the opportunity to speak with the ombudsman who is reviewing this Hydro One mess.

I will start by saying the meeting was inadequately publicised and was held during business hours which effectively ensured that no "working" customers could attend. This is unfair to Hydro One customers. The Government of Ontario cannot assume Hydro One consumers agree with what they are doing since they received "insufficient notice" of the meeting and no information at all as to its purpose or how to go about raising concerns at the meeting or otherwise. As for the slip Hydro One provided in the mail, I did call the number to complete the survey, but no one bothered to return my call.

Getting to the point, the ombudsman actually told me that the people of Ontario voted for this. For the record, the people of Ontario do not all deal with Hydro One. At least half get their hydro from better managed, municipally utility providers (e.g. Sudbury Hydro). These people should not have a say in Hydro One matters.

Instead of assuming Hydro One customers want to pay for the Provincial Government's spending, why not handle this openly and honestly by cutting delivery costs and debt recovery out of our invoicing altogether and by inserting an "opt in" box on Hydro One invoices (the same way the CCRA does on our tax returns) and ask openly and honestly if the Hydro One customer would like to donate money toward these costs. That would be a better indicator of which Hydro One customers are willing to do so.

## Conclusion

Reform is necessary. Hydro One has a monopoly over an essential service. The Government of Ontario therefore owes Hydro One customers a heightened duty to ensure that Hydro One is properly managed.

It is high time that independent, private sector professionals step in and restructure Hydro One, eliminate the corruption, dispose of its inefficiencies, cut the fat.

Green energy projects need to be studied by independent, private sector experts and compared to other alternative sources of power (nuclear, hydro dams, etc.). The options and related costs of all new energy projects and exactly how this will affect the average household, must be openly communicated to those who are expected to pay for it, and these people should have the final say in how the government spends their hard-earned money. Those who do not pay should have no say.

Instead of managing costs down in difficult economic times, the mismanagement and corruption continues. My generation fought to give our children a better life. This government is condemning the next generation to hard financial times.

I confidently speak for all Hydro One customers when I say **No one wants to pay more money for Hydro, not one cent more.** We pay the same taxes as all Ontarians, we should be entitled to the same essential services for the same price.

You can watch for my comments in newspapers and on social media. Until I see my hydro bill going down instead of up, I plan to educate Hydro One users, if necessary, one customer at a time.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gilbert Rioux". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'G' and 'R'.

Gilbert Rioux

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