

Norm Miller [REDACTED]  
Presentation to the Ontario Energy Board  
July 13, 2017

Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to speak today about how Hydro One rate increases are impacting my constituents here in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Hydro prices are the number one issue I hear about from my constituents. So when I heard that Hydro One had applied for yet another increase to distribution rates, I knew I had to be here today to make sure my constituents' voices were heard.

Of the responses I got to my spring newsletter this year, sixty-nine per cent of people said that increasing electricity costs have had a significant impact on their families. I heard stories about people who are having to choose between paying their hydro bills and buying food. I heard from a senior on a fixed income who can't afford to go to the dentist because they don't have anything left after they pay their hydro bill.

I have also had hundreds of complaints to my constituency offices about increasing electricity costs, the majority that complain about high delivery rates. I have also had recent complaints from constituents that were classified as 'medium density' by Hydro One for years, and suddenly switched to the more expensive 'low density' classification. One constituent was classified as 'medium density' for 13 years, then suddenly changed to low density despite more people living in the neighbourhood.

High delivery costs of electricity has been a growing issue for a number of years, particularly in rural areas like this riding where many people have to heat with electricity. And in Parry Sound-Muskoka income levels are below the provincial average. Some people in rural areas can heat with wood, but many Seniors on fixed incomes heat the most expensive way with electric baseboard heaters.

Finally this year, facing sinking approval ratings, the Wynne government noticed how much trouble Ontarians were having paying their hydro bills. I do not agree with what they have done in creating a new debt and saddling us and our children with the extra interest payments, however I am relieved that the government finally noticed the mess they had created and the stress they were putting on Ontario families.

Since the rising hydro prices impacted businesses as well as families, that stress did not come just in the form of increasing hydro bills but in some cases, lost jobs.

I want to tell you about Northridge Inn and Resort, in Sundridge. Owners David Clemmer and Stéphane Aubin completed an energy audit and spent two-hundred thousand dollars in renovations to conserve energy and limit heat loss. Despite that, their hydro bills last winter were fourteen thousand dollars a month. And that is just opening for weekends.

With hydro bills like that, they can't afford to operate in winter. As a result, they will be closing their doors next winter and will have to lay off forty employees. Sundridge has a population of less than one thousand people so forty lost jobs is going to hit the whole town hard.

The Owner of Axiom Speaker company in Dwight, Ian Colquhoun emailed me to ask how companies in rural Ontario were to stay in business with Ontario's high electricity costs. He sent me his June 2016 bill. His total bill was \$3,600. Of that \$2,100 was the delivery charge. His all in cost was .43 cents per KWH. His product, world class speakers are shipped worldwide, and he is trying to keep production and jobs in Parry Sound-Muskoka, but high electricity costs and specifically delivery charges are making that challenging.

It is ironic that we are here discussing this hydro increase now while the Wynne government is busily advertising their so-called Fair Hydro Plan to reduce the cost of hydro.

We know based on a leaked cabinet document and the report of the Financial Accountability Officer that the reduction in hydro costs will be temporary and that the long term costs will be huge. It is evident that this plan, like the cancellation of the gas plants, is more about winning the next election than it is about helping Ontarians.

If the government really wanted to help Ontarians struggling with their hydro bills, they would have addressed the root causes of high electricity prices.

If the government really wanted to help Ontarians they would have stopped signing bad contracts to purchase expensive green power that we don't need. Instead, the day after they announced this so-called Fair Hydro Plan, the government accepted one thousand, one hundred new applications for new wind and solar installations. This while Ontario is spilling water at hydro electric dams.

If the government really wanted to help Ontarians they could have limited the outrageous salaries paid to Hydro One executives. The CEO of Hydro One is paid four point five million dollars per year. By comparison, his counterparts in Quebec and British Columbia earn less than half a million dollars.

Under the watch of this Liberal government Hydro One's distribution rates have increased by sixty per cent between 2005 and 2016 – that is more than three times the rate of inflation. And that is just for the distribution, not for the electricity itself. The price of the electricity has gone up as much as three-hundred per cent depending on the time of day and where the customer is in Ontario.

I ask you, the Ontario Energy Board, to stand up for the families in Parry Sound – Muskoka. Say no to this Hydro One distribution rate increase that will cost families an additional one-hundred and forty-one dollars per year when it is fully implemented.