

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Hydro, hydro, hydro is on residents' minds



When I speak to residents in Dufferin-Caledon, whether they are an owner of a small business or a local doctor, whether they are a retired pensioner or they are just starting a family, one issue comes up more than any other: skyrocketing hydro rates. It is not hard to understand why. Hydro rates have tripled, with some families paying \$1,000 more than they did in 2003. For years, the government made politically-motivated and reckless decisions that have driven up the cost of hydro. According to the independent, non-partisan office of the legislature, the Auditor General, Ontarians have overpaid \$9.2 billion for hydro, because the government provided sweetheart deals to energy companies, meaning hydro customers were locked into 20-year guaranteed price program for renewable energy. More recently, the Auditor General revealed that electricity generators claimed \$260 million of ineligible expenses for things like staff car washes, landscaping, scuba gear and raccoon traps. We also know that the Liberal hydro policy decisions have led to Ontario spilling 7.6 terrawatt-hours of clean, green Ontario water power. That would have been enough power for 760,000 homes.

I have heard from families who have had to make serious decisions about whether they can put food on the table, or pay their hydro bills. I have heard from businesses who have said that skyrocketing hydro rates are costing Ontario jobs and in some cases causing business to move to other jurisdictions or close all together.

It is abundantly clear that residents in Dufferin-Caledon need long term and sustainable hydro relief. That is why Patrick Brown and the Ontario PCs announced a plan to lower the average hydro bill by an additional 12 per cent.

The plan will do this through a number of mechanisms. First, it will rebate the government's portion of the Hydro One dividend directly to ratepayers on their hydro bill. This will result in a savings of about five per cent. Next, the plan will move conservation funding to the tax base, saving ratepayers an average of about three per cent. The plan will also address Ontario's oversupply of electricity, by placing a moratorium on any new energy contracts and renegotiating contracts where feasible for an additional four per cent off the average hydro bill.

Under the Liberals, hydro rates have tripled to some of the highest in North America. The PC plan for electricity is long-term and sustainable and will mean real relief for families, small business and farmers. Twelve per cent off your hydro bill is part of Patrick Brown and the PC party's People's Guarantee. The plan includes five guarantees: 22.5 per cent lower income taxes or the middle class; up to 75 per cent refund for child care expenses; 12 per cent more off your hydro bill; the largest mental health commitment in Canadian provincial history; and the first ever Trust, Integrity, and Accountability Act.