

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Energy costs continue to rise and hydro continues to be mismanaged

Recent events continue to remind us of the government's mismanagement of Ontario's hydro system and that Ontarian taxpayers are paying more and getting less.

First, Siemens, a wind turbine blade manufacturer, announced it was closing its doors in Tilsonburg, meaning 340 jobs lost. Next, the Fraser Institute released a report showing that Ontario's electricity rates are the fastest rising in the country. Meanwhile, as Hydro One is applying to raise electricity rates for Ontarians by \$141 a year, they were spending \$7 billion purchasing a foreign utility company.

Many rural businesses, families and agricultural operations look to natural gas as a way to protect themselves against high hydro bills. Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that the government's energy mismanagement is impacting natural gas as well. The Ontario Energy Board July 1 approved a Natural Gas rate increase. The rate increase will mean an average Enbridge customer will pay \$36 more a year to heat their home. It is a sad reality that energy costs still continue to rise under the Wynne Liberals. Natural gas is essential for many rural businesses and agriculture.

These rising energy costs can be attributed to the Liberal's cap-and-trade cash grab. The government knew that their cap-and-trade scheme would raise heating costs in Ontario, so they hid the cost of their plan. That is why the Progressive Conservative Party has a Private Member's Bill before the Legislature to add a separate line item on natural gas bills to show the true cost of cap-and-trade on Ontarian's heating bills.

The government has failed on its promise to expand natural gas. The government originally promised \$230 million for the expansion of natural gas, but slashed the program by \$130 million in February 2017. It is also worth remembering that at this time last year the Globe and Mail was reporting on a leaked cabinet document showing that the government was considering banning the use of natural gas. The government's 'cabinet confidential' plan called for 'new building code rules that require all homes and small buildings built in 2030 or later to be heated without using fossil fuels, such as natural gas. This would be expanded to all buildings before 2050.'

