

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Why the Hydro One sale is a bad deal



Since the government announced in their budget they intend to sell-off 60 per cent of Hydro One, my Progressive Conservative colleagues and I have studied the implications.

We believe this is a bad deal for Ontarians that will result in a lack of oversight over Hydro One and no reduction in Ontario's sky-high energy rates. The government's privatization plan isn't about lowering hydro rates that continue to balloon, or about improving customer service or increasing efficiencies at Hydro One. Rather it is simply a way for this government to pay for their poor fiscal decisions.

In an unprecedented move, Ontario's eight government watchdogs: the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the Integrity Commissioner, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the French Languages Services Commissioner, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Environment Commissioner and the Financial Accountability Officer, have raised concerns over the Liberal government's proposed Hydro One sale. The eight legislative officers are concerned about how the budget bill will strip away their oversight over the operations of Hydro One. For example, the Auditor General would be unable to carry out performance audits on Hydro One and its subsidiaries. In addition, the Ombudsman would be unable to investigate public complaints against Hydro One and its subsidiaries.

My PC colleagues and I have warned that the government wants less oversight over Hydro One. We need to ensure accountability and oversight is maintained, especially at a time when hydro rates are ballooning and there were more than 10,000 complaints to the Ombudsman against Hydro One from April 2013 to April 2015.

We do not believe that the Liberal government should sell off government assets to pay for their history of financial mismanagement. Unfortunately, that is what the Hydro One sell-off is. This is akin to selling the house to pay for a pool. Through this government's record of mismanagement, they have wasted billions of taxpayer's dollars. Whether it was the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants, or eHealth, or the failed Smart Meter program, Ontarians are the ones paying for these mistakes.

Poorly thought-out government policies imposed on Hydro One, have contributed to skyrocketing hydro rates. Unfortunately Ontarians have no choice when it comes to where they buy their hydro, and if we lose majority ownership of Hydro One, ratepayers will be forced to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates.

Since the announcement, both opposition parties during Question Period have criticized the government's intention to sell-off Hydro One. We believe the government must reconsider its proposal and focus on reducing Ontario's high energy rates instead of selling off government assets.

To read more about what the Hydro One sell-off will mean to you, please visit, www.stopthehydrofiresale.ca

-30-