

People in Brampton vent about sale of Hydro One

By Bill Rea

The Provincial government is getting ready to sell off 60 per cent of Hydro One to the private sector, and a lot of people don't like it, including area New Democrats.

The party held a town hall meeting in Brampton last Thursday, attended by party Leader Andrea Horwath and Bramalea-Gore-Malton MPP Jagmeet Singh.

Singh told the more than 100 people on hand at Professor's Lake Recreation Centre that Hydro One is a public asset.

"It's ours," he said, adding the government should be seeking public input before selling something like that.

Singh warned the sale will result in higher Hydro rates.

He also charged the Liberals complained when the Progressive Conservative Government of Mike Harris sold Highway 407, but they are now doing the same thing.

"When we look at the Liberals, we can all seem them as PCs," he commented.

One disadvantage to privatization is there's no oversight. Singh observed that if Hydro rates are currently too high, there is the Ombudsman and Auditor General to keep an eye on things. But that's won't be the case of the sale goes through.

"Once Hydro's sold, it's sold for good," he said.

"It's just bad on so many levels," he added. "I don't know where to start or end."

"The privatization of Hydro is Wrong," Horwath added. "It's the wrong choice for the people of Ontario."

She added it was Harris who started the privatization process. She also pointed out the rates have tripled since the Liberals came to power, and people are having trouble now paying for the service.

"People literally will not be able to turn on the lights," she said, adding government should be making things better for people.

"Ontarians did not vote for this," Horwath added, pointing out Premier Kathleen Wynne did not campaign on this. "They did not vote for privatization in the last election."

As well, Horwath charged there has been no public consultation on this, adding the government just wants to ram it through the legislature.

One man at the meeting suggested there be a rally organized at Queen's Park to fight this. "They're going to ram it through quick; we've got to be quicker," he said.

Concerns were expressed that higher Hydro rates would drive some companies to move to the U.S.A. or Mexico, along with complaints that the Liberals had lashed out at Harris when he started working on privatizing Hydro.

Horwath said she couldn't explain the motivation of the Grits.

"It's certainly not in the best interests of the public," she commented, adding it's more likely to benefit Wynne's friends on Bay Street. One man likened Wynne to a "capitalist predator paying off her friends who got her elected."

Horwath added Harris did try it, but it was challenged in the courts. Harris got around it by stating any proceeds from the sale of public assets would go paying off debt. It was the Liberals who amended that, with Wynne saying the money will go to pay for transit.

There were also concerns about what would happen when the rates get so high, hospitals won't be able to operate all their equipment.

One man charged this will increase health care costs, adding the amount needed to power schools will add to education taxes.

"This is not good for anyone," he declared.

One woman tried to bring in a "dose of reality about what we really can do about this," pointing out the Wynne Liberals have a majority at Queen's Park.

"If we don't do anything, we have absolutely no chance whatsoever," Horwath countered, adding they have to do what they can to show the Liberals they could "go the way of the Alberta Conservatives" if they push this through.



Ontario NDP?Leader Andrea Horwath and Bramalea-Gore-Malton MPP Jagmeet Singh spoke at last week's town hall meeting in Brampton.