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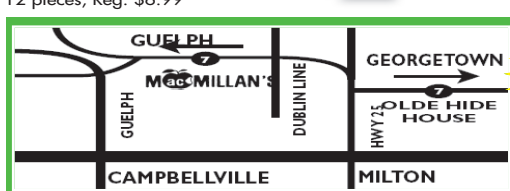
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# Hydro to stay in Town's hands

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

Mayor Rick Bonnette was thrilled with a speech made by Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli to the Electricity Distributors Association Monday that means good news for Halton Hills Hydro.

Chiarelli said the Provincial government would not force consolidation of distribution companies despite a three-member panel recommendation.

Chiarelli said in the speech, "The Panel's analysis also suggests there are substantial efficiencies to be found in the sector through consolidation of our distribution companies. Let me say very clearly that our Government will not legislate forced consolidation... while we are interested in promoting consolidation on a voluntary basis in the sector, we must find ways to deliver the savings to ratepayers that the panel identified."

Chiarelli also tweeted the news directly to the mayor Tuesday morning.

"I guess once again Halton Hills has carried a stick and our concerns were listened to by the minister," said Bonnette. "This is awesome news for Halton Hills that we won't be forced in an amalgamation with a huge utility."

Earlier this month, the Town sent a res-

olution to Chiarelli and Premier Kathleen Wynne stating it opposes the merger of smaller hydro utility companies into larger regional entities.

It was in response to the recommendation for mergers outlined in the Renewing Ontario's Electricity Distribution Sector: Putting the Customer First panel report. The panel calculates mergers of the province's 73 utilities into 8-12 regional distributors, with a minimum of 400,000 households, would mean about \$70/year savings for customers by the end of the tenth year.

Bonnette said this plan could lead to monopolies "as in future years they may have been down to two utilities in all of Ontario if they went down this path."

Halton Hills Hydro has the lowest residential distribution rates in Halton and is ranked sixth out of 43 utilities, based on its operations, maintenance and administration costs. The utility has provided \$1.95 million in interest and dividend payments in 2012 to its sole shareholder—the Town.

Halton Hills Hydro has 23,000 customers served by 51 staff members who take care of 1,464 kilometres of power lines, 3,828 distribution transformers, and seven supply points.



**RICK BONNETTE**

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