

It's time to act on hydro rates

If the task of reining in hydro rates wasn't a priority for Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals before, it must be now.

A plea for relief from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce reinforces the need for change before more damage is done to manufacturing in this province.

"If real and meaningful action is not taken to mitigate these increases, businesses will leave the province, jobs will be lost and our economy will suffer," said Allan O'Dette, the chamber's president and CEO.

In its recent report, the chamber argues rising hydro prices will cause one in 20 businesses to close during the next five years. And 38 per cent of companies will delay or cancel investments, citing rates as the reason.

These are serious concerns and they emerge just as the government moves forward with plans to put 60 per cent of Hydro One in private hands.

We can only speculate what that prospect will mean for rates in the future.

Would investors care that businesses are struggling to pay the bills?

Fears over the costs of doing business reached the highest level a few weeks ago, when Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Group CEO Sergio Marchionne met with Wynne.

Marchionne made it clear Ontario's ability to retain investment and jobs is tied closely to the additional costs companies face when choosing to be here.

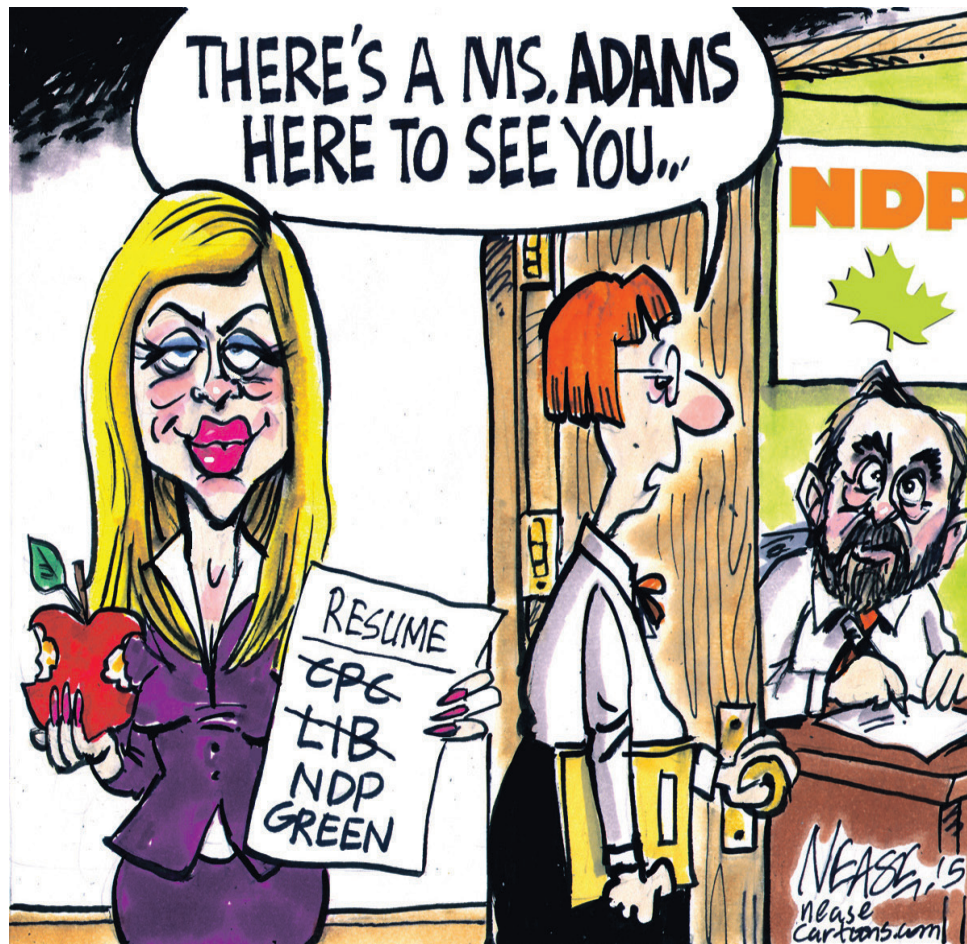
"This is not what I would call the cheapest jurisdiction," he said.

A reliable, affordable power system was once a drawing card for this province in terms of attracting investment. Regaining that reputation could go a long way toward restoring Ontario's economy.

Putting the Crown corporation for sale on the stock market may alleviate some debt problems, but it won't address the need to attract and retain investment in Ontario.

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Letters to the editor

Think about what you eat

Every year, gas and food prices keep going higher and higher.

As a student who will be going to university or college in the next couple of years, I know that my tuition will be very expensive and, if I stay on campus, my residence fees will also be costly and I will more than likely have to buy a food plan just like my sister did this past year in her first year of university.

I know from our family experience that because education is so expensive, when it comes time for me to eat during my semester, I will more than likely be choosing unhealthy, less expensive, quick food choices because it will be all I can afford.

Today a major issue in our health system is obesity and people being overweight.

Families are so busy these days and have their kids doing so many extracurricular sports and activities that nobody is taking the time to eat

healthy because it takes time.

And there are the families who don't have lots of money and can't afford things and sometimes food is one of them.

So much has changed over the years that unhealthy eating habits are being passed down and, because of this, there are more cases of diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

If you were to ask my generation if the government were to make a plan to make healthy food choices more affordable and whether they would then start eating better, they probably wouldn't.

There is so much information about what food is good for you and what isn't, but people know that bad food tastes good and it is less expensive, so that usually parents will choose the bad food over the healthy choices because of the cost and time involved in eating healthy.

Big food companies are to blame because they just want your money.

They charge less and know that people will keep coming back, even if they know they are providing people with unhealthy junk food.

I have a few suggestions about how to maybe help start a plan to turn people to make better, healthier food choices, which would also help with long-term health care costs.

I think taxes should be increased on junk food, and should be decreased or have none at all on healthy foods.

I think there should be limited media marketing to children about how good fatty and sugary foods are.

I think that like cigarette packages, graphic warning labels should be put on pop and high-calorie foods and foods with no nutrition at all.

In the grocery stores, there should be information and displays that tell people about the health risks for choosing junk food over healthy food.

I also think it would be a good idea to take out all the snack bars that only offer no-nutrition food choices and sugary drinks at recreational facilities where so many sports and activities for young people take place every day.

James Evans