

COMMENT

The way we were



Back to school

The Public School on Education Lane, Acton, circa 1898. Opened in 1859, the brick section was built in front of the older stone school in 1892. Renamed Robert Little Public School in 1952 in honour of the longtime community educator and former principal, the old stone section was destroyed by fire in 1957.

Text courtesy of Heritage Halton Hills; Photo courtesy of Esquesing Historical Society

From our readers



SPECIAL VISITOR

Photographer Robert Cormier said, "We woke up to find a visitor resting in our hosta garden. She stayed for about an hour before leaving. Later we learned that she was hiding two fawns in our neighbour's backyard. The doe is in our backyard located on Market Street in Georgetown. The fawn was hiding in the next door neighbour's backyard."

Have a photo you want to share?

Email — with details — to cgamble@theifp.ca

Why do our hydro bills keep going up?

The high cost of electricity is one of the top concerns in Ontario today.

We hear of seniors whose hands tremble as they open their hydro bill. We also hear of lost jobs when industries leave Ontario and head south, because our electricity costs are the highest in North America.

In politics, it is very easy to point the finger of blame at the incumbent Government.

Conversely, there are still some Liberals who try to blame the former Progressive Conservative Governments for all that ails the province. This line of argument is undercut by the fact that Liberals have been in power at Queen's Park since 2003. Most fair-minded people would agree that a dozen years is ample time to undo any policy inherited from a predecessor.

One group that does not deserve blame for the high cost of electricity is our local hydro utilities. By and large, they are focused on efficient and effective community service and they do an outstanding job.

Here are some of the factors driving up hydro rates:

1. The Government's Feed-in Tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar power generating companies.

The wind turbines we see across rural Ontario have raised health concerns and are very controversial. The windmills, along with solar panels, have and will continue to increase generation and transmission costs, and put upward pressure on bills.

2. The politically-motivated decisions to cancel the planned natural gas-fired generating stations in Oakville and Mississauga.

These decisions to save the seats of a few nervous Liberal MPPs have cost \$1.1 billion, according to the Auditor General. These costs have been passed onto hydro ratepayers and taxpayers.

3. New investment in hydro transmission infrastructure.

The Government likes to talk about the billions that have been spent on new towers and wires, but there's no disputing that this has pushed up costs.

4. The Debt Retirement Charge

We continue to pay this charge on our hydro bills, even though the debt should have been paid off long ago. *The Toronto Star* recently reported that Ontarians have paid \$11.5 billion for an original stranded hydro debt of \$7.8 billion. Where is the money going?

5. Paying other jurisdictions to take our surplus power.

Believe it or not, there have been times when Ontario has exported subsidized electricity to the U.S., Quebec and Manitoba, in effect, paying them to take our surplus power. The Government has never adequately explained why this is happening.

This year, the Wynne Government announced plans to sell shares in Hydro One.

Our PC Caucus opposes this plan. We have called it a fire sale. We believe the proposed sale is secretive, the Ontario Government will lose majority control, there will be no real oversight, and it will almost certainly create even more upward pressure on hydro bills.

It's not surprising that the Government's own public opinion polls have shown that their plan to sell Hydro One is also opposed by the vast majority of Ontarians.

The Government needs to listen to the people it serves, revisit the very idea of the Hydro One sale before it becomes a debacle, and initiate a new approach which seeks to stabilize hydro rates.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott welcomes your comments. He can be reached at 1-800-265-2366. His website address is www.tedarnottmpp.com.



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