

OPINION

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Paying the price for energy gluttony

While last week's announced hydro rate hike by the Ontario Energy Board may be a bitter pill for homeowners and businesses to swallow, it should surprise no one.

Two and a half years after the lights went out across Halton Hills during the widespread blackout of 2003, we don't seem to be getting the message that we have been living a lie where hydro rates are concerned.

When the residential hydro rate jumps from 5 cents to 5.8 cents per-kilowatt next month, we will all feel it in our wallets, but will any of us do anything to change our hydro consumption habits?

According to the OEB, the hot summer of 2005 resulted in more frequent use of air conditioning in Ontario homes. That, in turn, required the province to import power and use electricity generated by natural-gas powered plants at a much higher cost than anticipated.

The increased energy use resulted in a \$384-million shortfall, which generated the need for last week's announced rate hike.

The 5.8-cent rate applies to the first 600 kilowatt-hours used. Beyond that the rate will soar to 6.7-cent (formerly 5.8 cents) per kilowatt-hour until November, when the 5.8-cent rate will be charged for the first 1,000 kwh— taking into account the number of Ontario homes that depend on electric heating in winter.

For the average Halton Hills homeowner the initial increase will result in an additional charge of \$11.92 per month. Depending on your hydro use that number could actually be higher or lower.

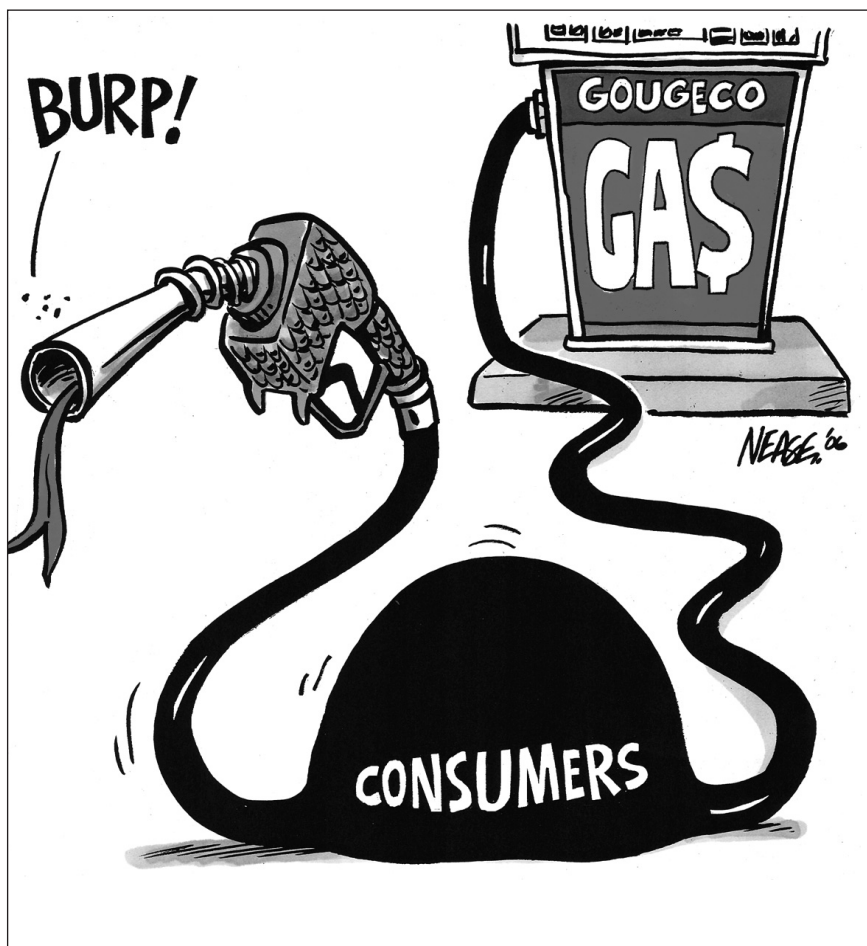
Subsidizing the true cost to supply hydro to our province is what created this hydro mess in the first place. We have only successive provincial governments and, by extension, ourselves to blame for today's unstable rates.

For low-income families the announced rate hike — which comes into effect on May 1— is the latest in a series of financial pressures that have included higher bank interest rates, increased property taxes and gasoline prices that dance around the \$1 per litre mark.

We suspect that the \$100 million set aside to provide one-time rebates of between \$60 and \$120 for the province's 1.5 million lowest-income families will be spent in short order.

If society can't gain control of its gluttonous hydro use, we should expect similar bad news next year— perhaps sooner.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chair says Campus Plan best for taxpayers

(This letter was written in response to a letter from Georgetown resident Chris Klomp that was published March 31).

Mr. Klomp,

Thank you for sharing your observations and concerns with me about Halton's Regional Campus Plan.

While I welcome the opportunity to provide 'brief' updates on important issues in Halton, sometimes it is impossible to include all the information that needs to be communicated in 500 words. Having said that, I think that you have missed the broader vision and positive aspects of this innovative initiative.

As a progressive government that utilizes all the tools available to reduce costs, you should know that there is a HUGE savings in the construction cost of the facility— there is only one taxpayer so if the school boards, police and Halton Region can each save money by not having to each purchase their own land and each build their own facilities, then the taxpayer saves money. And, this savings is in addition to the ongoing cost savings in day-to-day operations, given the numerous ways to minimize duplication in i.e. print shop, meeting rooms, and much more.

If you were able to access a map of the Campus Plan you would be able to see that it is located on Bronte Road at the QEW and on an Oakville bus route, not far from the Bronte GO station. In fact, the Oakville bus services the administration building now (Regional Administration and Police Headquarters). We have accounted for the 'social aspect' of doing business and

have been recognized for our accomplishments by being one of few government organizations to have been awarded Maclean's prestigious 100 Top Businesses in Canada. In addition, Halton has been confirmed for the 18th consecutive year, with our AAA rating from Moody's.

Leadership and being proactive is a reputation that Halton regional government has enjoyed for many years in Ontario and beyond. Our way of doing business is copied by many municipalities. We embrace our mandate of providing 'health and safety' to our residents with the utmost of respect and seriousness.

Decentralizing services, is the least efficient way to provide services, both from a human productivity and a financial resource aspect. There are

Youth canvasser impresses resident

Dear editor,

Recently I had the most charming young man at my door canvassing for CAS-hh (Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills). His name is Robert McNeilly, he's about 13 years old, and he told me his best friend's mom is Karen Vito, one of CAS-hh's volunteer campaign captains.

As I am on the board of directors for CAS-hh, I invited him in to chat while my husband went searching for his wallet. Robert seemed impressed when I told him of my involvement. Not being one to pass up on an opportunity, I asked him if he knew about the upcoming Crazy Outhouse Race (May 27). He had, but only in that he heard

some services that require a more local presence i.e. Ontario Works office or public health, but not administration.

You should also be aware that this was the optimum site because it is within 20 minutes of 80 per cent of Halton residents. I know that people travel much further for employment. So I don't think that this is a deterrent to employment opportunities.

I have every confidence that the plan that is being proposed is unique and truly represents 'out of the box thinking'; something that governments are accused of not doing. I also have every confidence that this is in the best interest of the taxpayers, now and for many years to come.

Joyce Savoline, Chairman,
Halton Region

we are looking for helpers to set up, and was glad he had met me because he wanted to know how he could be involved.

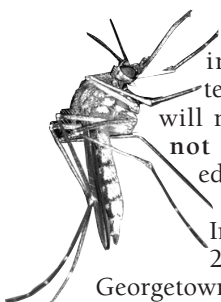
At first, I was a little surprised to see such a young canvasser, but after some thought I got that 'warm and fuzzy' feeling— how great to see kids involved. Kudos to Karen Vito for getting the kids away from the video games and TV and doing something meaningful.

We should all be very proud of this young man's efforts and of all the other young people of Halton Hills who work tirelessly to help out. They are our future, and I, for one, am glad they're out there.

Joanne Thompson, Georgetown

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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