

OPINION

Hydro rate hike no big surprise

While last week's announced hydro rate hike by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) 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 Milton during the widespread blackout of 2003, we don't seem to be getting the message that we've been living a lie where hydro rates are concerned.

When the residential hydro rate jumps from 5 cents to 5.8 cents per kilowatt-hour next month, we will all feel it in our wallets, but will any of us do anything to change our hydro consumption habits? Few of us are getting the message about the constant need to conserve.

According to the OEB, the long 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 had been anticipated.

The increased energy use — paid for at the household rate of 5 cents per kilowatt-hour — 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 cents (formerly 5.8 cents) per kilowatt-hour until November, when the 5.8-cent rate will be charged for the first 1,000 kilowatt-hours — taking into account the number of Ontario homes that depend on electric heating in winter.

For the average Milton homeowner the initial increase will result in an additional charge of \$6.57 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.

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. When that money is gone, the most vulnerable in our society will be left with the unenviable prospect of sacrificing food, clothing and other basic necessities of life in order to keep their lights on.

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



ReadersWrite

Send us your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

Campbellville would be an ideal site for Canada's little league hub

DEAR EDITOR:

I would like to know if The Champion would promote the idea of having Campbellville become the centre for little league baseball competition in Canada during the summer months.

This would be similar to the Little World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

This idea would stimulate tourism

and commercial traffic for the region by having baseball tournaments every weekend during the summer.

Campbellville is an ideal location because it has a baseball heritage and two close ball parks. The old ball park could be developed into a little league stadium.

P. YACKMAN
CAMPBELLVILLE

Theviewfromhere

Citizen Input 101: Getting involved in democratic process

What's the best way for a resident to make his or her feelings known when it comes to all of the new developments going up around town?

This is a very valid question I was e-mailed recently, and one I'd like to try to address through this column. For those who aren't politicians or municipal staff, the approval process for a development can be confusing.

To keep it simple I'll use the Town of Milton as an example, but the Region and other municipalities all follow the same type of process.

For starters, many proposed developments, whether it be a subdivision or a new store, have to apply to the Town for a zoning bylaw amendment.

So if a property is zoned agricultural and a developer wants to put up new homes, the

zoning would have to be changed to residential.

Public meetings are held for each zoning bylaw amendment. Notice of these meetings is sent to residents who live around the subject property and posted on the Town's Web site, www.milton.ca, on the home page under the 'Public Meetings' heading.

Frequently checking the Town's Web site is a good way to stay up-to-date on what proposals are currently being dealt with.

The public meeting stage is the best time to get involved in the democratic process since these forums are held specifically to gather public input.

Those who don't have time to attend can submit written comments.

After the Town has received all feedback, staff prepares a report that recommends either approving or denying the development.

In my experience, the report usually goes before committee and council anywhere from one to six months after the public meeting.

When the report is on a committee or council agenda, residents can register as a delegation at that meeting to once again share their thoughts.

The registration process to follow can also be found on the Town's Web site.

There's much more to say, but for now I hope this sheds some light on the topic and boosts citizen participation in the democratic process.



Melanie Hennessey

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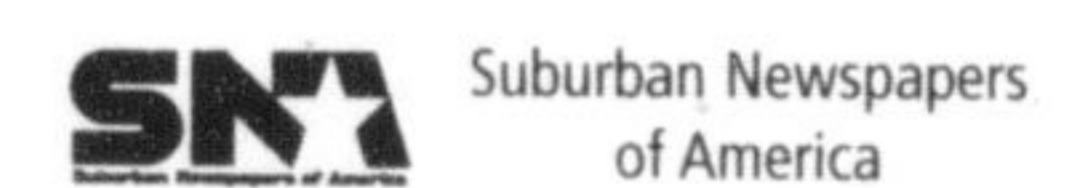
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