

NEWS

Program will be critical to many families, stresses Halton MPP

15. It currently provides a 10 per cent rebate to more than four million residential consumers, and approximately 400,000 small businesses and farms.

"This program (Ontario Electricity Support Program) will be critical to so many families and we can't afford to let them down," said Naidoo-Harris about the need to implement the program.

Also attending the announcement was Burlington MPP Eleanor McMahon, who said eliminating coal-fired power plants and upgrading existing infrastructure had spiked hydro rates in recent years.

"When you look at it we're all paying a little bit more for cleaner air and a more efficient system," she said.

Ontario Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli told re-

porters at Queen's Park in Toronto last Thursday that the average Ontario hydro bill will go up about \$120 a year as a result of the changes.

The cost increase to more affluent taxpayers under the new program is a worthwhile investment, and a "huge gift" to those in need, McMahon noted.

"We know that Ontarians are willing to pay this; we feel as though people are generous and will look at this as a cost that can borne by all of us," she said. "It's an investment in the health and wellbeing of those that are less fortunate."

Standing to benefit from more affordable hydro costs are those already using Habitat for Humanity Halton/Mississauga's services.

John Gerrard, CEO of the local non-profit, said

the provincial government's initiative supports Habitat's own mandate of eliminating poverty by providing affordable housing options.

Habitat for Humanity Halton/Mississauga will build 13 homes in Halton Region in 2015.

"This bold initiative will make that step (towards fulfilling our mandate) even better for us," Gerrard said. "This will definitely help low-income families keep their lights on at night."

— With files from the Toronto Star

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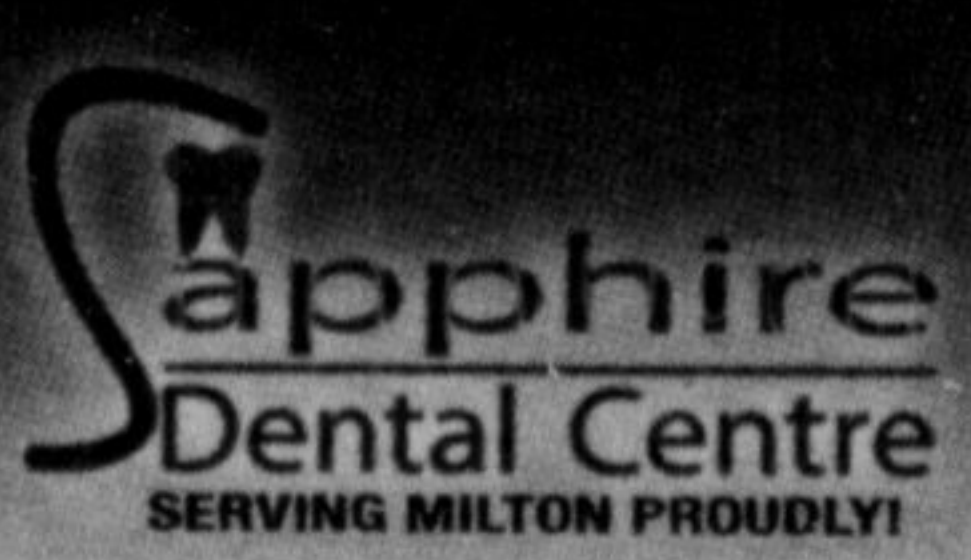
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