

Hydro rates will 'skyrocket': MPP

By Sarah Sobanski

The province has brought forward legislation for its promised hydro bill reduction, but other provincial party representatives aren't lining up behind it.

The Fair Hydro Act would, if passed, lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential customers to provide significant rate relief and ensure greater fairness, according to a release by the province. It also said Ontarians with low-income or living rurally could see as much as a 40 to 50 per cent drop including the eight per cent cut in January. Over the next four years, with this act, bills would only increase at the rate of inflation. This is great for people who are trying to save on their electricity bills. Unfortunately, this might not happen for a while, so people need to look to other means of saving on their bills, such as making sure they turn off all the lights when they don't need them, or using someone like these [light companies with no deposit](#) to help them save money. These are only a couple of tips for helping people save money on their bills, however, there is plenty more that can be done.

According to a press release by energy critic and local MPP Todd Smith, this plan will see hydro bills 'skyrocket' after four years. A leaked cabinet document shows the Liberal financing plan for hydro rates includes the 'return of the Debt Retirement Charge' under a slightly different name starting in 2025. It will be 'four times the size of the old charge by 2028, at more than \$21 on every bill.'

The return of the Debt Retirement Charge tells you all you need to know about how the Liberals view people's hydro bills, Smith said in the release. They don't think this is a problem for people's pocketbooks, they think this is a problem for their re-election chances. A \$21 Debt Retirement Charge is five times as big as the charge was the last time it was on your bill. He added, 'When the government came out with their scheme, we knew that they weren't fixing the underlying problems with the system and they were just creating a large debt and hiding it at Ontario Power Generation. They'll use it to subsidize rates until we get through the next election, at which point hydro rates start going back to record levels.'

The province said, if passed, the legislation would 'enable the Independent Electricity System Operator and Ontario Power Generation to work together to spread out the costs of Ontario's clean energy investments over a longer period of time, which ensures that the costs of these investments are allocated fairly among current and future ratepayers. This would be accomplished through refinancing a portion of the Global Adjustment, resulting in significant and immediate rate reductions.'

Smith's release stated 'the document shows that the average household electricity bill will jump almost \$75 a month over the next 10 years, and that Ontario will be experiencing record high hydro rates again by 2024.'

In a press release from the New Democratic Party, the party said it would vote against the plan. It said the leaked documents showed bills would 'shoot up sharply after the election.'

'This is a \$40-billion attempt to buy an election,' said NDP Leader Andrea Horwath in the release.

She added, 'There is nothing the NDP or anyone can do to stop Premier Wynne from plowing ahead with this bill and causing hydro bills to soar even higher after the election. But the NDP can't and won't vote in favour of higher hydro bills. Our plan to cut electricity bills by 30 per cent and return Hydro One to public hands is by far the better plan for Ontarians, and one we're committed to implement should we form government next year.'

The party release stated 'Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said Thursday that there are even more secret documents with further projections on how much the Liberal plan will cost ratepayers documents that remain hidden.'