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# OEB wants input on possible $141 increase

**By Sarah Sobanski**

The Ontario Energy Board is looking for input on multiple rate-increase applications by Hydro One.

If approved, hydro rates will increase an average of $2.35 for what the company describes as a ?typical residential customer of [the company], using 750 kWh per month? each year monthly from January 2018 to 2022 in ?electricity distribution rates.?

It's also applied for increases to transmission rates. The same ?typical? customer's monthly bill by $0.41 in 2017 and $0.48 in 2018.

The notice of the application for the distribution rates by the OEB stated, ?the amounts set out above are provided before the application of any credits that would be implemented under the Fair Hydro Act, 2017.?

MPP Todd ?Smith confirmed recently passed decreases in the act would apply to proposed increases if approved but said in a press release these increases would mean the average customer would end up paying $141 per year in distribution charges ? negating any benefit from the province's expansion of the Rural and Remote Rate Protection program.

?Hydro One is basically saying, ?We need to make improvements to the system, because they haven't been made.' That's why they're applying for a rate application,? said Smith. ?The government lines that they improved the system are rubbish. It's further proof that the money they spent went on new generation that we didn't need. A lot of the infrastructure across the province still needs to be replaced.?

Hydro One applied to the OEB to have an oral hearing for its applications ? there are also others rate increases proposed for Hydro One customers outside of North Hastings.

A notice sent out by the board states, ?Hydro One Networks Inc. has also applied for new service charges and for adjustments to many of its specific service charges, including increases to charges for the collection of accounts, for disconnection, reconnection and removal of load control devices and for access to Hydro One Networks Inc. power poles.?

Smith estimated, ?There's almost a pole per customer, a hydro pole per customer ? that's very, very expensive.?

He added, ?Replacing a pole when you're Hydro One clearly, it costs the entire system a lot more and clearly there's a lot more poles. What they're looking at doing is acquiring more urban type power distribution companies, and local distribution companies like Peterborough and Woodstock. They're very aggressive right now ? There [are] consolidations that are occurring all the time within the local distribution companies.?

The OEB's notice asked that customers weigh in on the proposed increases and whether there is need for an oral hearing by June 14.

?It's important to reach out to the Ontario Energy Board. They need to understand the plight of rural Hydro One customers and the impact that this is going to have on their bills,? said Smith.

Right now there are 20 applications before the board.

?This belongs in a file labelled ?Only in Ontario',? Smith stated in his release. ?I don't know too many Hydro One customers that can afford to pay $141 more every year for electricity. This increase is going to really start to hit just as we start paying those seven per? ?cent per year increases under the Liberal government's latest hydro scheme. So, the bill for Hydro One customers is going to get hit twice after the next election.?