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Ontario Election Campaign Spotlight: Public Power

Hydro rates in Ontario are growing faster than any other province in the country and we pay among the highest electricity costs in North America. In 2015, 60,000 homes were disconnected because they couldn't pay their bills. Studies have shown that 38 per cent of Ontarians struggle to pay their hydro bills at the end of the month, unsurprising given that the average cost of electricity has more than doubled over the last decade. ACORN's Public Power campaign calls on the Province to:

- Direct 25% of revenue raised from cap and trade to programs for low-income people*;
- Hydro billing:
 - Cap NSF fees, disconnection fees, reconnections fees, and late payment notice fees;
 - Increase OESP levels annually in line with hydro rate increases.

**Cap and trade is a program to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The government sets a cap which gradually decreases over time. Companies pay penalties for exceeding the cap. They have the option to buy and sell allowances from other companies who do not need their full allowance.*

What do the political parties say?

Note: only the ONDP and Liberals provided a response to our platform. Other responses have been gathered from party announcements, news reports, etc.

The **Ontario NDP** supports a just transition to a low-carbon economy. They promise to dedicate at least 25% of cap-and-trade revenues to programs that support disproportionately-burdened communities and families, including low-income people. They commit to investing \$50 million from cap-and-trade revenues to create a new no-interest/on-bill home-efficiency retrofit program for groups that face financial barriers, to support the installation of energy conserving technologies. The NDP plan to lower hydro bills by 30% by getting private profits off hydro bills and returning to public power, starting by restoring Hydro One to public ownership and control. They promise to renegotiate, cancel, or not renew bad private power contracts. The NDP say they will eliminate unfair rural delivery costs, end mandatory time-of-use rates, cap private profit margins, and return accountable public oversight to our hydro system. The party plans to expand the OESP and double the support for low-income families who heat with electricity. The Ontario NDP successfully fought to end winter disconnections, and an NDP government promises to end unfair and unjustifiable fees and disconnection policies that contribute to energy poverty.

Ontario NDP Public Power Summary

- Pricing: Reduce bills by 30% through conservation and by returning to public power. Expand OESP and double support for low-income families who heat with electricity. End mandatory time-of-use rates and unfair and unjustifiable fees.
 - Energy contracts: Renegotiate, cancel or not renew bad private contracts.
 - Cap and trade: Divert 25% of cap and trade revenues to programs for low-income people and other groups.
 - Social housing retrofits: \$50 million in cap-and-trade revenues towards a retrofit program aimed at increasing energy efficiency, targeted towards households facing financial barriers.
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The **Ontario Liberals** created and expanded the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) to support low-income Ontarians, banned winter disconnections, and brought in an Affordability Fund to support savings through energy efficiency. They also introduced the Fair Hydro Plan, to reduce hydro bills by 25%, and up to 50% for rural and northern Ontarians. The Liberals plan to upgrade the energy efficiency of social housing and improving living conditions for residents while fighting climate change, including efficient heating and cooling systems, windows, lighting and insulation. The Liberals' cap-and-trade program currently diverts revenues to programs that save homeowners energy and money, public transit, electric vehicle incentives and social housing retrofits, although they do not specify what amount goes towards programs for low-income people.

Ontario Liberals Public Power Summary

- Pricing: Continue with the Fair Hydro Plan to reduce bills by 25%.
 - Energy contracts: No plan provided.
 - Cap and trade: Support to save homeowners energy and money, investment in public transit, electric vehicle incentives and social housing retrofits, but they do not specify whether a percentage is earmarked for programs to benefit low-income people.
 - Social housing retrofits: Social housing upgrades including efficient heating and cooling systems, windows, lighting and insulation.
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The **Ontario PCs** say they will fire the CEO of Hydro One. However, since Hydro One was privatized, the Province does not have the power to make such staffing decisions. They say they will reduce hydro bills by 12% by diverting Hydro One dividends to customers and changing conservation program billing. The PCs propose a moratorium on new energy

contracts and say they will try to cancel or renegotiate existing contracts. The PCs have said they will scrap cap and trade.

Ontario PCs Public Power Summary

- Pricing: Reduce bills by an extra 12% through Hydro One dividends and changes to conservation program billing;
- Energy contracts: Moratorium on new contracts, cancel/renegotiate existing contracts;
- Cap and trade: Cancel cap and trade.
- Social housing retrofits: No plan put forward.

Find out more at acorncanada.org/ONElection