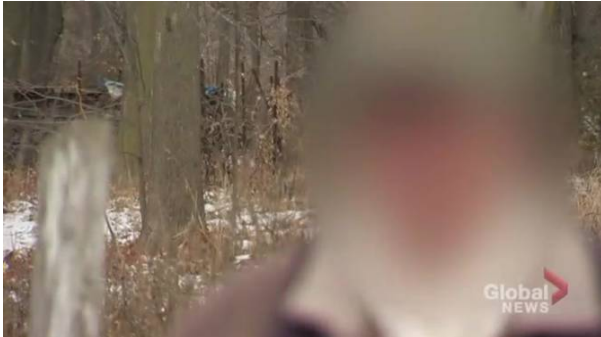


Hydro One leaves family of 6 without electricity for months

By **Brian Hill** Associate Producer Global News <https://globalnews.ca/news/3085450/hydro-one-leaves-family-of-six-without-electricity-for-months/>

WATCH: Woman living northeast of Toronto reacts after having hydro cut off since this past June



WATCH: High Hydro costs ruining the lives of Ontario families.

Some families simply can't afford to pay their Hydro (electric) bills. Mother and father and four children haven't had electricity for six months. They fear and distrust HYDRO ONE. Their bill has often hit more than \$900 a month, close to \$400 of which

was deliver costs, money spent before they even turned a light on.

- HYDRO ONE, they say was unforgiving.
- Electric cost - \$474
- Use – 4454 kwhr
- Delivery - \$369
- Total cost - \$843
- Or 0.189 per kwhr
- Arrears debt - \$3,949

Family is desperate. Once the arrears debt reached \$10,000, Hydro One sent a letter to explain. HydroOne would remove the wires from their house. HydroOne disconnected them several months ago. To reconnect would cost them thousands.

Carol: "I usually wait until the kids are asleep, then I cry. I try to be as positive but I can't". The couple, who live about an hour east of Toronto, were disconnected as a result of their owing over \$10,000 in late payments. They say that while their usage has not changed since they moved to the rural community 20 years earlier, their bills have increased 20-fold. "My husband, every day, brings water home for us," Carol said, unable to hold back her tears. "We drink bottled water. We cook on the BBQ. We boil water so the kids can have showers from shower bags." "It's just gone up and up and up," Carol said, referring to her monthly electricity bill. "Try explaining to your children why you can't get water from tap. Try explaining to your children why mommy is out in a blizzard trying to cook dinner on the BBQ. Try explaining that they're not to be embarrassed that they live in a house with no power."



Turning off power to families trying to make ends meet is quickly becoming a public relations nightmare, as far as the Province is concerned.

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Listen

Six months. That's how long Carol – a pseudonym as Global News has agreed to keep the family's identity private – has been without electricity.

With four teenage children at home, Carol and her husband, who has a well-paying, blue-collar job, were cut off from their electricity services by Hydro One in mid-June.

Since this time, her husband has used a hose at work to fill plastic-lined garbage cans with water so he and his family can bathe.

READ MORE: [Kingston, Ont. couple's hydro restored after anonymous donor pays bill](#)

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we calculated your charges

Balance forward	Amount of your last bill		
	Balance forward that is past due		\$3,662.47
Electricity	Your service type is Residential - Low Density		\$3,662.47
	Electricity used this billing period		
	We read your meter on April 07, 2016	on May 05, 2016	
	Difference in meter readings		
	Metered usage in kilowatt-hours (4,454.5992 x 1) = 4,454.5992 kWh		
	Electricity: Winter On-Peak: 688.8114 kWh @ 17.5000 ¢		\$120.54
	Mid-Peak: 644.8300 kWh @ 12.8000 ¢		\$82.54
	Off-Peak: 2,580.8730 kWh @ 8.3000 ¢		\$214.21
	Electricity: Summer On-Peak: 85.2804 kWh @ 18.0000 ¢		\$15.35
	Mid-Peak: 83.5848 kWh @ 13.2000 ¢		\$11.03
	Off-Peak: 371.2116 kWh @ 8.7000 ¢		\$32.30
	Delivery		\$15.35
	Regulatory Charges		\$11.03
	Debt Retirement Charge++		\$32.30
	HST (B7086-5821-RT0001)		\$338.95
	Total of your electricity charges		\$29.78
	++ Debt Retirement Charge exemption saved you \$31.18.		\$0.00
	Amers instalment (remaining balance \$3,949.04) **		\$109.81
	Late payment charge **		\$954.51
	Total adjustments		
	-- GST/HST exempt		

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A look at one of the couple's monthly hydro bills.

Global News

Since being disconnected, the family has survived off a gas-powered generator. They run the machine constantly, 24 hours a day, according to Carol.

"We're trying to make it as comfortable for them as we can," she said, describing how difficult it is to watch her children live without electricity. "There are days, weeks, you know, a week or two, where we didn't have a generator at all. So we were living by LED lights from the dollar store."

WATCH: More calls for moratorium on hydro disconnections



It's not for lack of trying, says Carol. The family has done everything they can to keep the lights on and the power running.

They've installed a wood stove, converted to energy-efficient bulbs, done laundry during off-peak hours and reduced their overall electricity consumption – but nothing works.

“We want someone to explain it to us,” Carol said. “It doesn't make sense.”

After months of living off a generator, Carol says she just hopes her family can be reconnected before winter sets in.

READ MORE: [Ontario advises other provinces to keep an eye on hydro bills as coal phased out](#)

WATCH: [Andrea Horwath questions Kathleen Wynne over Global News hydro bill story](#)



She says a neighbour, concerned for the childrens' well-being, contacted child protective services.

“Our children are our world and they’ve always been well cared for and loved,” said Carol. “But here we are, feeling scared and horrified because this could happen to us.”

Terrified, Carol and her husband do all they can to remain strong for their family.

WATCH: Woman living northeast of Toronto reacts after having hydro cut off since this past June



I usually wait till the kids are in bed and I know they're asleep," Carol said. "Then I cry, because I try to be as positive as I can for them."

Hydro One responds

Hydro One, the province's largest utility distributor, **disconnected nearly 10,000 homes from their electricity services in 2015.**

In total, customers owed the company more than \$105 million dollars in back-payments by the end of last year.

Despite knowing how difficult it has been for families in Ontario struggling with rising energy costs, the company continues to disconnect residential customers – even as winter approaches.

"Cut-offs and disconnections are the last resort," said Ferio Pugliese, executive vice president of customer service at Hydro One. "In the latter part of the fall, we actually move into a moratorium on disconnections."

READ MORE: [Rising energy costs and poverty collide in rural Ontario](#)

Still, this is of little help to families like Carol's who've been without electricity for months and have little hope of being reconnected before the company's Dec. 1 cut-off date for disconnections.

Asked about a letter Carol's family received on Oct. 22 stating that Hydro One would come to remove their equipment from the family's home if the bill were not paid in full, Pugliese said "reasonableness" should be applied and that some of the company's policies might be outdated.

"Our hearts go out to these folks. These are difficult times and we care for the customer," said Pugliese. "With respect to removing hardware from the premises, we need to revisit that policy because, I'll be frank with you, we don't necessarily view that as very customer-friendly – especially if the individual is in a financial predicament that we're trying to help them through."

'Growing' profits at Hydro One

On Nov. 11, Hydro One released its most recent third-quarter financial statements.

The company, which was recently privatized by the Ontario Liberal government, reported profits of approximately \$835 million, or roughly \$750 for each of Hydro One's 1.1 million residential customers.

READ MORE: [Premier Kathleen Wynne calls high electricity prices her 'mistake'](#)

Earnings per share, which reflect the overall profitability of the company for investors, increased by nearly 24 per cent when compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

Overall, Hydro One says the future looks good.

"The quarterly results announced today demonstrate continued execution of our plan to build momentum as we focus across the business on enhancing our operations and customer service, revitalizing Ontario's electric grid and accelerating our growth," said Mayo Schmidt, president and CEO of Hydro One.