



## **ELECTRICITY MARKET UPDATE**

The Ontario government has introduced new legislation (Bill 4), an amendment to the Electricity Act, 1998 that will ensure a fair and predictable approach to electricity pricing.

This plan removes the current 4.3¢ per kWh price freeze in favor of a pricing structure that better reflects the true cost of electricity in Ontario and includes a strong incentive to conserve energy. Starting **April 1, 2004**, an interim pricing plan will be implemented. The first 750 kilowatt hours consumed in any month would be priced at 4.7¢ per kilowatt hour. Consumption above that level would be priced at a rate of 5.5¢ per kilowatt hour. Approximately 60% of Ontario households use less than 1,000 kilowatt hours per month.

This pricing plan will stay in place until the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) develops new mechanisms for setting prices in the future. The OEB's new pricing mechanism will be in place as soon as possible and no later than May 1, 2005.

This legislation will protect residential and low-volume consumers from the volatile price spikes seen under the previous government's original plan, so families, small businesses and other low-volume consumers could better manage their energy costs.

While this plan will increase the cost of electricity, it is a significant step toward attracting new electricity supply to Ontario to sustain our future energy needs.

### **For additional information:**

Ministry of Energy – [www.energy.gov.on.ca](http://www.energy.gov.on.ca)

Ontario Energy Board – [www.oeb.gov.on.ca](http://www.oeb.gov.on.ca)

Independent Market Operator – [www.iemo.com](http://www.iemo.com)

Electricity Distributors Assoc. – [www.eda-on.ca](http://www.eda-on.ca)

## **TREE TRIMMING**

The Orillia Power Corporation has a tree-trimming program that is necessary to maintain a safe clearance between the overhead electrical power lines and tree branches to ensure a dependable power supply and to reduce the risk of injury to the general public. Unfortunately, we presently have a number of situations in the City where incompatible species were planted many years ago and have matured to the point where significant trimming in the centre of the tree crown is required for both public safety and reliability. There is no cost to the homeowner.

OPC is well aware that a wet or sap-filled branch contacting one of our overhead circuits can conduct electricity and severely injure a child or anyone contacting the tree or worse.

OPC is currently working very closely with the City of Orillia to finalize a tree planting policy that will result in only compatible species being planted in the vicinity of both overhead and underground power circuits.

## **SMART METERING – “the pay as you go power”**

The Orillia Power Corporation is currently undertaking a study of this new optional technology.



The pay as you go smart card is encoded with the customer's account number and the dollar amount of electricity purchased. When the customer buys power at convenient payment locations (ie. a local convenience store) the information is transferred to the card and when inserted into the in-home display box, the amount of electricity purchased is automatically updated.

The customer information unit plugs into any home outlet. It communicates with the meter and when there are about 4 days of electricity left, the unit will alert the customer. The display box also provides the following information:

- ◆ dollar value of electricity remaining
- ◆ present use per hour in dollars and cents
- ◆ dollar amount used yesterday
- ◆ dollar amount used in previous month
- ◆ present rate in cents per kilowatt hour

Use of the “smart meter” would be strictly on a **voluntary basis** and it would be up to the individual customer's choice. Tests have shown in other municipalities, that such a program has made residential customers more aware of the cost of electricity and has produced voluntary consumption savings of up to 20% **resulting in lower customer electricity bills**. More information will be available shortly.

**Is there a topic you would like to see in our newsletter?** Please let us know. You can reach us at 326-2495, ext. 224, fax at 326-0800 or e-mail us at [info@orilliapower.ca](mailto:info@orilliapower.ca)

### **Did you know?**

Orillia Power customers pay 30% less in Debt Retirement Charges on their power bills than most communities in Ontario due to this historical impact of our local generation.

## GENERATOR SAFETY

Today, more and more people are turning to in-home generators offering security for those occurrences when electricity from the power grid is not available. It is very important that all generators be connected safely. Improper connections can be hazardous, not only to you, but to utility personnel as well.

A few tips to keep in mind when considering a generator for your home:

- Portable generators are the most widely used. This style of generator has receptacles to which you directly plug in your critical appliances or other equipment and is a safe electrical connection.
- Some choose to connect a standby generator directly to their electrical panel or home wiring. This provides the potential for “back feed” conditions. This is when electricity from the generator flows back into the grid and can pose an electrocution hazard for our utility personnel.
  - Have a licensed electrician make your generator connections
  - Have a transfer switch installed to insure that your electrical panel is disconnected from our grid when your generator is operating,
  - Have the entire installation inspected and approved by the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA).

**Remember, always to read and understand the operating instructions for your generator before use!**

### ***Please be kind to our meter readers....***

Reading meters at this time of year can be especially risky. Slips and falls are among the most frequent mishaps. Blocked and cluttered meter areas, snow, ice, fences and shrubs can make life difficult for our meter readers.

Ensuring clear and safe access to your hydro meter is very much appreciated by those individuals providing this service. They work in all kinds of weather to make sure the job gets done on time. Our meter readers wear a “URB” uniform and carry an identification badge.



## SHARE THE WARMTH

Share the Warmth is a registered, not-for-profit charity that purchases heat and energy on behalf of families, seniors, terminally ill and disabled persons living at or near the poverty level. Share the Warmth is a cashless charity which does not give money directly to applicants. Share the Warmth converts 100% of all public donations to heat and energy for households. Orillia Power is a proud sponsor of Share The Warmth and we believe that Share the Warmth encourages a charitable response that is common to all those who have endured a Canadian winter. A little warmth goes a long way...

Contact Orillia Power to find out more, or check out their website at [www.sharethewarmth.org](http://www.sharethewarmth.org)

## HOME SAFETY – ELECTRICAL SHOCK & FIRE HAZARDS

Everyone needs to consider electrical safety. The 1<sup>st</sup> step is awareness – awareness that electricity must be used safely. The 2<sup>nd</sup> step is reducing and eliminating risk by recognizing that simple precautions will keep you electrically safe. Electrical shock and fire hazards are often caused by poor or improperly installed wiring and electrical systems.

The **Electrical Safety Authority** encourages you to regularly check your home for:

- loose or damaged plugs
- damaged and/or frayed electrical cords
- fuses that blow or circuit breakers that trip frequently or circuits that won't work when fuses are replaced or breakers reset
- dim or flickering lights

### **DON'T**

- remove the 3<sup>rd</sup> prong from an extension cord – this prong exists to prevent shocks
- place under carpets or heavy furniture
- don't use an extension cord in place of permanent wiring
- use if cord is damaged, ie. loose prongs, split in plastic casing, or heats excessively when in use
- overload electrical outlets by plugging in too many things
- wind cords tightly around an object – this could cause the small wires inside to break
- nail cords to walls or floors – it punctures the insulation and can short out the wires

### **DO**

- install ground fault circuit interrupters in your bathrooms and laundry rooms
- check that all electrical appliances are “approved” with recognized approval markings to ensure they meet the electrical safety requirements for Ontario
- keep your electrical cords well maintained
- be careful in the bathroom and near sinks – if your hands are wet or you are standing on a damp floor, you could get a serious shock from a hairdryer or other electrical appliance

Get informed, get comfortable, get familiar with electrical matters in Ontario such as safety. Think safety, act safely.  
Electricity.... handle with care



[www.elecsafe.info](http://www.elecsafe.info)

This newsletter is a publication of  
**Orillia Power Distribution Corporation**  
360 West St. S. Orillia, Ontario L3V 6J9 Phone: 705-326-7315, Fax: 705-326-0800  
email: [info@orilliapower.ca](mailto:info@orilliapower.ca) web site: [www.orilliapower.ca](http://www.orilliapower.ca)