

Orillia Packet & Times  
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## Advanced Technology Hub



It's been a few weeks since Council announced the City of Orillia is entering into negotiations with Hydro One that could see \$200-300 million in economic impact on the City over the next few years. With a vision of developing an Advanced Technology Hub on the majority of the 42 acres of city-owned employment lands in West Orillia, this opportunity has the potential to be truly transformative for our community.

Hydro One has made it clear that in order to invest in our City they would have to acquire the distribution assets of the Orillia Power Corporation (OPC). Council has made it very clear that the generation side of OPC will not be affected.

For those of you who may be uncertain about the distinction between the two, the distribution side of Orillia Power is the lines and wires portion of the business, which is responsible for the delivery and billing of electricity in Orillia. The generation side of Orillia Power includes three hydroelectric generating stations that create power sold on the open market. It is the generation side of OPC that is poised for future growth and contributes the majority of the dividend received annually by the City of Orillia.

Since we made this announcement on Sept. 22, I have been speaking with residents and businesses about the opportunity. Many are excited about what this deal could mean for the future of Orillia. The significant number of new, highly-skilled jobs coming to town, the potential of attracting new businesses to the City, and the long-term spin-off effects of a development such as this, is all good news for many.

That being said, I have also heard concerns about what this deal could mean in terms of electricity rates, customer service levels, and overall uncertainty of entrusting Hydro One with our electricity distribution.

Let me assure you that Council is aware of these concerns and will address them during the negotiation period.

Council will only agree to a deal that protects the interests of Orillia Power customers and the Orillia community. This means we will only agree to a deal that provides a multi-year window of price stability on the cost of electricity distribution for our residents and businesses. We will also only agree to a deal that sees Hydro One working with the City

to protect Orillia Power distribution jobs, which means the people from Orillia Power serving you today will likely be the people serving you should a deal be struck.

I also understand some of you may have questions, concerns, or opinions around the privatization of Hydro One, but that issue is separate from this and is unrelated to the opportunity presented to the City.

The electricity industry is undergoing many changes throughout Ontario, at both the local and provincial levels. What the City of Orillia is focused on is making sure Hydro One comes to the negotiating table with the best possible deal for Orillia that will benefit our City, not only in the short-term, but in the long-term as well.

Council would not be considering this deal if it weren't for the significant economic development potential it presents. We are doing the responsible thing in exploring this opportunity. We came into office with a commitment of fostering economic growth in our community and that is exactly what we are doing.

I want to reiterate something I said during the official announcement. Transformative opportunities such as Georgian College, OPP General Headquarters, and Lakehead University coming to Orillia, don't present themselves every day. This Advanced Technology Hub has the potential to be just as influential as those on our community. It is Council's responsibility to honour our past, improve our present, and put things in place to ensure a prosperous future. This deal could accomplish all three.

I encourage anyone with questions or concerns about this to contact me. I can be reached at [mayor@orillia.ca](mailto:mayor@orillia.ca) or by phone at 705-325-2447. For those who want to learn more about this exciting opportunity visit <http://orillia.ca/techhub>.

*Mayor Steve Clarke*