

Opinion

Point of View

Businesses suffering under hefty bills

Businesses are suffering in Ontario and while the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is trying to provide a hand and lobby for them the provincial government seems to be sticking to a script.

A report by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce released earlier this week focussed strictly on energy costs in the province. Because of those prices, businesses are being forced to shutter their doors and windows or relocate to areas where energy is affordable.

The report, released Wednesday, outlined recommendations the government should take in order to reduce the cost of electricity of businesses. Among the report's recommendations is to keep the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC) on residential bills until it has been retired, spreading the burden of past government decisions across ratepayers.

No sooner had three local chambers of commerce come out supporting the report, though, and a Ministry of Energy representative fired back. Dan Moulton, policy advisor in the office of the province's energy minister, said the report wasn't accurate and the province has implemented programs to help businesses and reduce their energy costs.

That's strange considering, for the past number of years, businesses

here in Quinte and across Ontario have only complained about high energy bills.

"Rising Electrical Prices has been the number one biggest concern raised by local manufacturers through the Quinte Manufacturing Association," said Suzanne Andrews, general manager at the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce.

No kidding. Just look at Sigma Stretch Film where plant manager Kevin McCaugen noted his most recent energy bill was \$433,000. Of that amount, though, McCaugen noted only \$41,000 of that reflected actual energy costs — the rest was tied up in delivery charges and fees and adjustments.

But the Liberals are looking out for these businesses.

And then people wonder why the economy in the province is struggling. It's because of situations such as this. Businesses are trying to stay active, trying to retain employees but when bills are coming in at such ridiculous amounts what are the options?

Perhaps, instead of wasting time and spinning 'positive' responses to such reports the government should be examining how to reduce costs, how to help these businesses and how to make sure companies aren't forced to leave Ontario.