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**Ontario's Solar Panel Promise:  
 Why Did It Lose Its Shine?**

By Dale Jodoin

Once upon a time, Ontario promised a greener future. The government introduced the Feed-In Tariff (FIT) and microFIT programs, which encouraged homeowners and businesses to install solar panels on their rooftops. The dream was simple: generate clean energy, reduce dependency on oil, and earn money by feeding electricity back into the grid. But today, many feel betrayed. What went wrong?

**A Promising Start**

In the early days, the Ontario government offered significant financial incentives for those who participated. Homeowners could earn as much as 80.2 cents per kilowatt-hour of electricity generated. For many, this was a no-brainer. Solar panels became a symbol of hope—a chance for individuals to fight climate change while earning extra income.

However, as years went by, the shine of this promise dulled. By 2017, the payments had been slashed to as low as 19.2 cents per kilowatt-hour. The program itself was discontinued, leaving thousands who invested in solar panels wondering why the government had changed course.

**Broken Promises and Angry Homeowners**

For people like Sarah Clarke of Oshawa, the program was more than just an investment; it was a commitment to a greener future. "I believed in it," she said. "I wanted to do my part, but now I'm stuck with a leaky roof from the solar panels, and there's no help to fix it."

Sarah isn't alone. Many homeowners who took part in the program now face expensive repairs. Solar panels can cause roofing issues, and without the financial benefits initially promised, homeowners feel abandoned. "We trusted the government," Sarah said. "Now they've moved on, and we're left with the mess."

**Cheaper Panels, Higher Costs**

The solar panel industry has also changed dramatically. Panels manufactured in China have made solar installations more affordable, but there's a catch. The Canadian government has imposed tariffs on some imported goods, including solar panels, which could drive up prices. Critics argue this will increase costs for those who want to install panels in the future.

"If the government wants us to go green, why are they making it harder and more expensive?" asked Sarah. "They talk about green energy all the time, but where's the support for people like us who took the leap years ago?"

**The Shift Away from Rooftop Solar**

The Ontario government has shifted its focus to other green energy initiatives, such as large-scale solar farms and energy efficiency programs. While these efforts aim to address climate change on a broader scale, they leave individual homeowners feeling left out.

"The FIT program made us feel like we were part of the solution," Sarah said. "Now, we're just ignored."

**The Bigger Picture**

Ontario's shift reflects a broader trend in green energy policy. Governments are moving away from small-scale initiatives in favor of larger projects that are easier to manage and more cost-effective. But for people like Sarah, this shift feels like a betrayal.

"We did what they asked us to do," she said. "We believed in the green dream. But now they've taken it away and left us with nothing."

**What's Next for Solar in Ontario?**

The rising cost of solar panels, combined with the lack of support for homeowners, has left many wondering if the promise of green energy was ever genuine. Critics argue the government has talked a good game about climate change but failed to deliver meaningful support for individuals who want to make a difference.

"The government loves to talk about green energy," Sarah said. "But it feels like it's all talk. Where's the action? Where's the help for people like me?"

The dream of a solar-powered Ontario hasn't disappeared, but for many, it feels out of reach. Homeowners who embraced the government's vision of rooftop solar feel abandoned, stuck with costly repairs and dwindling financial benefits.

If Ontario is serious about green energy, it must do more than talk. It must listen to people like Sarah Clarke and provide the support they need—not just for the future, but for the promises made in the past. Until then, the shine of Ontario's solar promise will remain dimmed.

**WHITBY ALLOWS UP TO THREE ADDITIONAL HOMES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY**

Whitby Council, during its meeting, approved an amendment to the Whitby Official Plan to permit up to three additional dwelling units (ADUs) as of right.

This brings the total to four home units on parcels of urban residential land.

In 2023, council directed town staff to complete work to permit four residential units as of right in support of the town's Housing Accelerator Fund application. In January 2024, the town was allotted \$24.9 million in federal Housing Accelerator funding. In part, this funding will support additional housing units in Whitby through the permission for up to four dwelling units on parcels of urban residential land subject to zoning compliance, said a town statement.

Whitby Council has pledged to facilitate the development of 18,000 new dwelling units by 2031.

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**FIRE DEPARTMENT WARNS AGAINST RELIANCE ON FIRE BLANKETS**

Pickering Fire Services is urging residents to rely on established fire safety measures instead of newer products like fire blankets, which the Office of the Fire Marshal has not endorsed for consumer use.

Fire blankets, which are marketed as tools for extinguishing flames, including stovetop fires, are not supported by Canadian safety standards and are recommended only for use by trained professionals.

"Pickering Fire Services fully supports the Office of the Fire Marshal's recommendation that fire blankets are not intended for consumer use," said Pickering Fire Chief Steve Boyd. "While these products may appear to offer a convenient solution, they can inadvertently create a false sense of security, leading people to rely on unsafe fire safety practices during an emergency. We strongly encourage residents to prioritize proven, time-tested fire protection measures that have been shown to save lives."

**Proven Fire Safety Practices Cooking Safety**

Stay in the kitchen while cooking and monitor the stove closely.

Turn pot handles towards the back of the stove and keep lids nearby.

For small grease fires, slide a lid over the pan and turn off the burner.

**Smoke Alarms**

Install smoke alarms on every storey of the home and outside all sleeping areas.

For added safety, install smoke alarms inside every bedroom.

Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries annually.

Replace all smoke alarms every 10 years.

**Home Escape Plans**

Create a home fire escape plan with all household members, detailing safe exits.

Practice the escape plan regularly, including with overnight guests.

**TAKE THE THREE SECOND TEST!!!**

Turn to any page in this newspaper. Look at any ad for the count of three. Then turn page. Tell me what you remember of that ad or page?

Can you recall product?

Can you recall phone number?

Can you recall what was advertised?

Can you recall address?

Can you recall company name?

Can you recall any pictures?

Can you recall any logos?

If little or nothing. You just proven why **BUS ADVERTISING, BILL BOARDS, ELECTRONIC ROAD SIDE SIGNS** do not work.

**WHY:** - Normally when people are driving they are constantly looking around for all kind of safety reasons. Three seconds tends to be the rule for determining decision making. When looking at a bus. People look for safety first then what is actually on the bus. This compounded with the fragmented artwork due to windows and doors. The average person does not truly see the ad. They notice a bus in motion and maybe the color. Not the messages on it. Much like when you turned the page. You could retain some minute detail but not the whole message.

**On a billboard.** The key to advertising is simplicity. More than two points. The readers will not be able to retain any information. Therefore the sign will be rendered useless.

**Electronic road side signs** - Same principle. The high color and light affect in many cases even though appealing. It is also very confusing for the mind to retain any information.

Priority is the wow factor of the brightness, (one second). Then word recognition (two seconds). Finally, understanding of what the eye has just witnessed.

These form of advertising do not generally work and can be very costly. The key or purpose for these forms of media to have an impact. It relies on respecting the three second rule.

What this means is that the message has to be contained and clear as for bus advertising. Many try to put too much in a bus that has windows and moving doors. This making the ads look like a badly composed ransom note.

For Electronic road side signs and signs in general. Most advertisers again do not respect the three second rule. Drivers, walkers do not sit there and read signs. They glance and move on. If a service or product is needed. It is highly speculated that they will not have a pen and paper ready to take down the advertisers information.

**Online advertising/social media.** Online/social media advertisement operates on a three click rule. If your viewer fails to go to the particular interest in three clicks. Viewer will just move on and or 'x' it off. Look at the number of 'Likes'.

**Then what is the answer?**

Newsprint advertising has gone through some major transformations in the past 15 years. Those, that failed to adjust have fallen, declared bankruptcy.

The bottom line is that newsprint advertising has decades of proven success.

**WHY:** People like to have information in their hands. Easy access and simple. Anyone can turn a page. Not everyone can find an online site and or afford internet.

Information in news print is reliable and comes from a source known in the community.

Social media has become nothing short of a public toilet. Everyone uses and abuses it. From entities pretending to be reputable companies to the many fraudsters.

Online information has become unreliable and manipulative as it plays on people's weaknesses.

There is no value in no cost. With news print. You pay for a subscription to be assured to have reliable information.

Advertisers, they get what they pay for.

**VALUE.** As newsprint may change but never go away.

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