

# Citizens worried Hydro's new meters hurt health

By Tracey Arial  
The Suburban

Several citizens attended the LaSalle borough meeting on April 2 to complain that Hydro Quebec's new smart metres cause health problems.

One man reported that his parents have headaches and vomiting. A woman reported tinnitus and headaches.

"I have a constant ringing in my ears since they started installing," said LaSalle resident Monika Niedbalski. "It started about a week before they came on my street in February. It's a high pitch and it does not go away. It's getting worse. It's 24/7."

Niedbalski plans to see a doctor, but after reading a report from the American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM), she's convinced Hydro Quebec's new digital metres are behind her illness. She's created a Google blog to share what she's learned called LaSalle Refuse.

Her blog includes a copy of the AAEM report, which cites 20 different studies linking smart meter radiation to neurological conditions, muscular pain and tightness, heart and lung disease, nausea, belching, ear and tooth pain, itchy skin and nervous system dys-

function.

"AAEM recommends that patients with a broad range of medical conditions avoid sources of EMF and RF radiation, especially smart meters on patients' homes and on neighbors' homes, nearby."

Such studies have caused 39 municipalities in British Columbia and Santa Cruz, California to ban the digital meters currently being installed on homes across North America and in Australia, Europe and New Zealand.

Residents hope that Quebec too will ban them. So far, 1,877 people have signed a petition asking the National Assembly to stop the new metres from being installed in Quebec. It remains active until May 27.

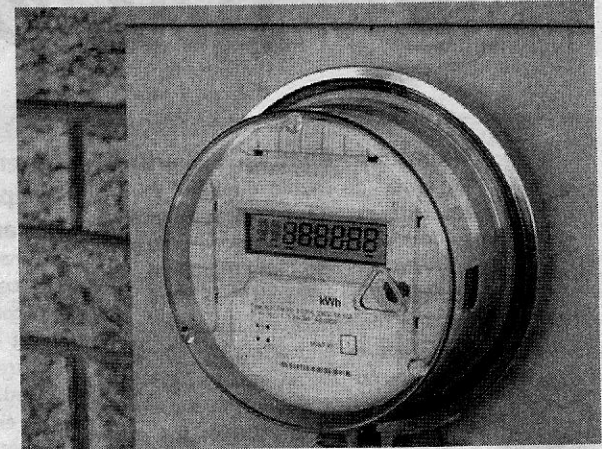
The controversy here began in May 2011 when Hydro Quebec signed a \$350 million contract with technology giant Landis + Gyr to install three million smart meters by 2017.

Property owners get a letter offering two choices, says Niedbalski, who got hers in January. They can allow Hydro to install a new digital metre that communicates for free or pay \$98 to get one that doesn't communicate plus \$17 monthly to have the meter read.

Niedbalski prefers neither option. When an installer knocked on her door in February, she videotaped her refusal.

"The analog metres we have now are perfectly safe," she said. "The only ones who are going to make money [by changing them] is Hydro. We're like sitting guinea pigs. I refused it for me and my tenants."

She and others complained to LaSalle borough councillors, who met with Hydro Quebec for two hours on Thursday, March 28.



"We have no jurisdiction over the actions of Hydro Quebec, but we've asked them to suspend installation of the equipment in LaSalle until after a public meeting takes place," said LaSalle Mayor Manon Barbe to a flurry of applause at the borough meeting April 2.

Hydro Quebec has held one such information session, on Thursday, April 4. Some 200 Lachine, LaSalle, Laval and Pointe aux Tremble residents attended.

"I think that Hydro did not expect the questions that were asked," said Niedbalski. "It was pretty intense. Two engineers who understand microwaves were there, and all Hydro kept saying was that the meters comply with Health Canada and with code 6. Code 6 is so ridiculously high, no matter what you do, it's going to comply. People saw that Hydro was preaching."

Hydro Quebec's digital metre installation continues in Beaconsfield on April 15. ■