

Additional Qs for Geraldton Lunch

Q1. The Municipality of Greenstone and other local stakeholders have long been advocating for a new transmission line to be built to supply the area, what is taking the Ministry so long meet this request?

I understand that there is significant interest in building a new 230 kilovolt line from local First Nation communities, the municipality of Greenstone, mining operations and other stakeholders in Greenstone. I also understand that a key driver for the line would be to serve load from new mining developments such as Greenstone Gold Mines Hardrock Mine.

As you are aware, electricity transmission in Ontario is built on a “beneficiary pays” basis. This is done so that costs for a new line that only benefits specific customers are not applied to rates paid by all ratepayers. This is an important principle because it helps to keep electricity rates from increasing, which benefits families and businesses across the province.

I understand that the Greenstone area faces unique challenges, including concerns about the reliability performance of the existing transmission system. This is why the Ministry has been participating in a working group with local stakeholders to work collaboratively on improving electricity infrastructure in the region. I expect that the working group will bring forward information about the local needs and opportunities that will support decisions on electricity supply.

Any decision related to electricity infrastructure will be made in consideration of the impact on electricity rates and our commitment to reduce electricity costs for families and businesses.

Q2. Can a Greenstone transmission line be named a priority in the next LTEP?

The ministry has received comments related to transmission in Greenstone during our extensive engagement on the next Long Term Energy Plan (LTEP). This included requests that the line be named as a priority in the LTEP and the Ministry will carefully consider these comments as the Plan is developed. These comments will also be considered alongside other comments we have received such as the broad interest in managing the cost of electricity.

The Ministry has formed the Greenstone Electricity Supply Working Group with key stakeholders in the Greenstone area to gather detailed information on regional electricity supply. The information gathered by the working group will allow for evidence-based decisions and will further inform the Long Term Energy Plan.

Q3. The high cost of energy is having a significant impact on families in Northern Ontario. What is the Province of Ontario doing to provide affordable energy to the people of Northern Ontario?

Ontario has a suite of conservation and energy efficiency programs in place that help homes and businesses (including municipal, commercial and industrial customers) manage their electricity usage and costs through financial incentives for the installation of electricity savings measures.

Electricity conservation programs are available through local distribution companies (LDCs) such as Hydro One, as well as the Independent Electricity System Operator (e.g. for transmission-connected customers). Ontario's two largest natural gas utilities, Enbridge and Union Gas, also offer energy efficiency programs to their customers.

For residential customers, electricity and natural gas energy efficiency programs include:

Save On Energy rebates help offset the cost of purchasing and installing new heating and cooling equipment in the home, and coupons are available to help Ontarians save on a wide range of energy-efficient products, including LED bulbs, power bars with integrated timers or auto-shutoff, and more.

For low-income electricity customers, the *Save On Energy* Home Assistance Program offers detailed in-home energy assessments and installation of energy-saving measures at no cost. Enbridge Gas and Union Gas have similar programs for their natural gas low-income customers.

Financial incentives are available for home energy audits and energy retrofits through Enbridge Gas' Home Energy Conservation Program and Union Gas' Home Reno Rebate. These programs have been extended across the province to homes that heat with natural gas, oil, propane and wood through a \$100 million provincial investment from the Green Investment Fund.

Q4. Does the new Fair Hydro Plan provide any funding assistance or enhance conservation programs for families?

We understand the rising costs are a concern, which is why we are bringing in savings now through new initiatives that will cut costs directly on your energy bill.

As a government, we've been focused on ensuring that our electricity system has been fairer for families living in rural areas or with low-incomes.

Ontario will help the most vulnerable by enhancing electricity support programs and shifting cost off the electricity bill

Eligible consumers will receive additional funding through assistance and conservation programs including:

- Establishing a new Affordability Fund which will provide energy efficiency measures to Ontarians who are not eligible for the *Save on Energy Home Assistance Program*, and who are otherwise unable to make energy efficiency improvements without financial assistance.
- Broadening Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Protection (RRRP) to provide Delivery Charge Relief for the customers of the local distribution companies (LDC's) with the highest delivery charges. Expanding the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) by increasing the credits by 50%, and broadening eligibility to customers who previously did not qualify.
- Establishing a new On-Reserve First Nations Delivery Rate.

