

Communications Snapshot

Electricity Bill Redesign

November 27, 2017

Communications Objectives

- Raise awareness about Ontario's work to support redesigned electricity bills that are clear, informative and easy to read.
- Inform Ontarians of revisions to the regulatory framework on invoicing to prescribe content and language on electricity bills.
- Highlight changes to the regulation that are meant to make it easier for customers to find the information they are looking for on their bills and for bills to be more consumer friendly – including definitions.
- Prepare mitigation strategy to manage potential negative reaction and issues.

Context

- The current regulatory framework governing electricity invoices has been criticized as a patchwork of measures that limit the invoice's readability and usefulness to consumers.
- Electricity bills are a customer's main window into the electricity system. Through the Long-Term Energy Plan consultation process, the government heard that customers find their current bills confusing and inaccessible.
- In the 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan released on October 26, 2017, the Ministry of Energy committed to redesign electricity bills to make them more understandable and to give consumers the information they want on a more consumer friendly bill.
- Hydro One has been a leader in consumer research on ways to improve the appearance and comprehension of its bill. Hydro One enlisted the services of a behavioural research firm and engaged with thousands of customers to develop a new bill design which has been observed to increase customer satisfaction and comprehension.
- Building on this research, the Ministry launched the Bill Redesign Action Plan (RAP) with the aim of revising the regulatory framework on invoicing to improve the value of electricity bills for consumers.
- The Ministry engaged with industry and consumers to better understand consumer concerns and preferences with respect to the bill to ensure that any proposed changes to the bill's design will meet consumer's needs. As part of this approach, the Ministry:
 - Engaged with Hydro One and BEWorks to learn more about how consumers react to the information presented on bills.
 - Formed the RAP Local Distribution Companies (LDC) Working Group to seek the best advice from industry on how to develop new invoicing requirements.
 - Undertook qualitative consumer engagement to hear directly from customers on their billing preferences.
- The Ministry will be informed by its own qualitative and quantitative research on the content of electricity bills in an effort to represent the interests of a broader set of regionally diverse consumers across Ontario.
- One of the proposed amendments would require customer-specific Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan savings to appear on invoices – this initiative is the first step as part of the broader re-design initiative.
- The Ministry intends to bring forward a broader bill-redesign framework in early 2018.

Target Audiences

- Ontario families and businesses that receive an electricity bill
- Industry partners (e.g., LDCs, associations)
- Internal and other energy sector partners (e.g., Hydro One, intra-ministry)

Key Messages

- Electricity bills are changing to better meet the needs and expectations of customers
- Electricity bills will be clear, informative and more consumer friendly with the essential information about electricity costs and usage

Strategic Approach

- Build on work by Hydro One in the redesign of their bill
- High profile Minister's announcement of the ministry's regulatory amendments and plans to support the redesign for all Ontarians (TBC)
 - January/February 2018 media event with Minister and representatives from Hydro One
 - Enlarged examples of current and redesigned bills will be on display
- Integrated communications strategy – including digital – in development

Issues & Mitigation

- If proposed regulatory amendments are approved, local distribution companies may react negatively to the proposed timelines by which they would be expected to comply, and the associated costs to implement design changes to their bills.
 - There is a mitigation strategy in place to manage this potential reaction
- Electricity customers may be concerned about the costs of redesigning the bill—and why the costs were not applied to reduce their current bills.
 - There will be issues management and key messages to address these issues.

Issue/Consideration	Mitigation Strategy	Key Message
Focus on bill design ▪ Electricity customers may question whether the government's focus should be on bill design or on the amount people have to pay.	▪ Convey sensitivity to the cost pressures on electricity consumers and acknowledge that much-needed investments in our electricity system have led to higher electricity prices.	▪ Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan reduced electricity bills for all residential customers by an average of 25 per cent and will hold any increases to the rate of inflation for four years. As many as half a million small businesses and farms are also benefitting. ▪ Through the 2017 Long-Term Energy Plan (LTEP) consultation process, the government heard that consumers find their current bills confusing and inaccessible. ▪ To address these concerns, the Ministry is working with consumers and industry partners to redesign electricity bills to ensure bills are clear, informative and more consumer friendly.

Issue/Consideration	Mitigation Strategy	Key Message
Hidden increases Electricity customers may wonder whether the government is hiding increases in redesigning the bill.	Provide clarification that the redesign is to make bills are clear, informative and more consumer friendly.	- Redesigning electricity bills is about making bills clear, informative and more consumer friendly with the essential information about electricity costs and usage. - Electricity bills are changing to better meet the needs and expectations of customers.
Cost impact of new design Electricity customers will want to know the impact of the redesign on their bills.	Convey sensitivity to cost impact.	- Each Local Distribution Company will have different costs to implement a re-designed bill depending on current billing and customer information systems. - Changes to billing systems are a part of an LDC's cost of doing business.

Tactics & Rollout

Launch Event	
Proposed Date and Time	Location
Launch date: TBD	TBD
Description <i>(What is the event, who is leading it? If it's a third party event, how does it connect to the announcement?)</i>	
- Minister's event - Presenters will provide an overview of the electricity bill redesign initiative - Minister will be invited to deliver short speech - Minister will be available for questions from the media	
Visual/Photo-op <i>(Describe the backdrop (e.g., protected greenbelt forest) and describe any planned photo ops (e.g., boarding a new TTC streetcar).</i>	
- Podium sign - Other visual items (e.g., images)	
Speakers & Attendees	
- Minister of Energy - Deputy Minister of Energy - ADM leads on the bill redesign file	

Other speakers:

- TBD

Estimated number of attendees:

- TBD

	Pre-Launch	Launch	Post-Launch
Regional Rollout Examples: - MPP Template - Speeches - Media event - Op-ed, media pitch - Editorial board meeting			- Regional/ local echo media events to leverage good news stories
Earned Examples: - News release, etc. - Remarks - Event - Calls/emails to targeted audiences - Multilingual media - Fact sheets - House Statement	- Redesigned electricity bill sample (mocked up based on research and customer feedback)	- Minister's event - Media kit, including News Release and Backgrounder(s) - And one or more of: ▪ House statement ▪ Speech for the Minister of Energy	- Targeted stakeholder briefings - Stakeholder correspondence - Evaluation
Digital / Social Examples: - Web content - Twitter/Facebook - Keyword / interactive web - Blogger outreach - Videos		- Web page – Ontario.ca - Social media content in development	- Organic social media - Evaluation
Paid (must include budget) Examples: - TV/radio/newspaper - Online banners/ads - Advertorial - Householder/direct mail	n/a	n/a	n/a

Evaluation

News media

- Use media measurement system to evaluate, track and record each news article and editorial (broadcast, print, web) including re-prints of wire services and broadcast syndication, record verified reach, apply a scale to evaluate key message pickup, photo and tone

Social media

- Reach and engagement for organic posts

Website

- Measure unique visitors and engagement to ERB page

Correspondence

- Track the number of letters and emails referring to the redesigned electricity bill