

Ministry of Energy

Office of the Minister

4th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 2E1
Tel.: 416-327-6758
Fax: 416-327-6754

Ministère de l'Énergie

Bureau du ministre

4^e étage, édifice Hearst
900, rue Bay
Toronto ON M7A 2E1
Tél. : 416 327-6758
Téléc. : 416 327-6754



MC-2017-518

Chief Paul Syrette
Garden River First Nation
7 Shingwauk Street
Garden River ON P6A 6Z8

Dear Chief Syrette:

Thank you for hosting our First Nations–Ontario Energy Table meeting on March 10, 2017.

I welcomed the opportunity to continue our meaningful dialogue on energy matters of mutual interest, and from our discussions that afternoon, there were many good ideas brought up that are worthy of ongoing discussion. Together, we are giving life to the 2015 Political Accord.

I am grateful for the hospitality and friendliness extended to our contingent of Ontario representatives by you and the people of Garden River First Nation. I also want to reiterate Ontario Regional Chief Day's sincere condolences on the passing of the young woman from the community and regret that we were unaware of the memorial service.

I was pleased to share information about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which proposes several measures to lower electricity bills for residential customers, including the establishment of a new on-reserve delivery credit for First Nations. Implementing the Fair Hydro Plan will be a vital activity of the ministry over the next few months, and we commit to working together on this major initiative. In particular, I believe an implementation working group for the First Nation Delivery Credit is an immediate action item for us as we seek your advice on how to implement and communicate this important initiative. I will be asking Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Reid to work with Chief Day's office to identify next steps.

As you know, the ministry is also working diligently to review the feedback we received during the extensive Indigenous and public engagements that were held across the province as part of renewing Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan. The input received from First Nation individuals, communities and organizations is critical to informing the policies and programs that will ensure the continued participation of Indigenous communities in the energy sector, including generation, conservation, and major transmission line projects.

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I understand my staff are working to put in place an LTEP “report back” session that would support continued First Nation-Ontario dialogue on energy issues and priorities. This session would provide an opportunity for representatives from all interested First Nation communities, Political-Territorial Organizations and Tribal Councils to come together, reflect back on the feedback provided to the ministry and bring forward any new ideas that have been percolating since our initial fall 2016 LTEP First Nation engagement sessions. ADM Reid and Director Nakahara will be working with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Many other issues were discussed and we will continue to give those more thought to identify possible approaches. Work on grievance issues will continue and we will be mindful of the role of Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. Federal commitment to the connection of remote First Nations will be pursued vigorously by all of us. I appreciate your involvement and the open dialogue we fostered during our afternoon together. The Energy Table has been a productive forum for discussions and action. The First Nation Delivery Credit is perhaps the clearest way that our joint action and motivation has resulted in meaningful benefits to Ontario First Nations. The leadership and perseverance on that file is impressive and I am happy that we have been your successful partners in this regard.

We remain committed to ongoing dialogue regarding the unique challenges faced by First Nations in the energy sector. We have much to be proud of in terms of what we have accomplished together, and I look forward to this continued collaboration. We will maintain our work with First Nation partners in securing the historic opportunity for First Nations to participate in the Hydro One share offering. We will work together to help First Nation communities advance their energy goals. And we can continue to showcase for our respective governments how a true Ontario and First Nation partnership model can benefit all parties and fulfil the spirit of reconciliation.

Thank you again and please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

Glenn Thibeault
Minister

c: Ontario Regional Chief Day