

Sessional Paper No.Q-130

Ms. Scott — Enquiry of the Ministry — Would the Minister of Energy identify how many residents of the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock qualify for the Rural or Remote Rate Protection Program (Tabled October 24, 2016)

Response:

We understand the financial pressure that rising electricity prices are putting on Ontarians, and that is why the province is taking action to help manage electricity bills for families, farms, and businesses by introducing new measures that will provide a rebate equal to the provincial portion of the HST to reduce bills by 8% (about \$130 annually for a typical residential electricity consumer). This rebate will take effect January 1, 2017.

Ontario also recently announced that it will provide eligible rural ratepayers with additional relief, decreasing total electricity bills by an average of \$540 a year or \$45 each month (combined with the 8 % rebate included).

Rural or Remote Rate Protection

Rural or Remote Rate Protection (RRRP) provides a rate subsidy to rural or remote customers who are faced with higher distribution costs relative to urban areas and non-urban areas with higher density.

Low density Hydro One residential customers (R2 rate class), representing approximately 330,000 rural electricity customers who are resident full-time (at least 8 months a year) in dwellings occupied as residences, including those in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, will receive additional rural relief under the RRRP program.

The criteria outlining eligibility for RRRP is established under section 79 of the *Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998* and O. Reg. 442/01 and O. Reg. 445/07 under the Act.

The Ministry does not have information regarding the exact location of Hydro One customers, as that is personal customer information. Please contact Hydro One for more information on the distribution of R2 customers across the Province.

Existing Programs

In addition to these efforts, Ontario also has several initiatives in place that are helping consumers to manage rising energy prices, including:

- The Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), which, provides an ongoing rate reduction directly on the bills of low-income electricity consumers who have applied and meet the eligibility requirements.
 - This is a rate relief program funded by all ratepayers for low-income ratepayers who have applied and meet the eligibility requirements. OESP

monthly credits range from \$30 to \$50. A household receiving the lowest OESP credit would receive \$360/year off their bills, or \$425/year when combined with the removal of the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC).

- Customers with unique electricity needs, such as customers using electric heating, customers relying on certain electricity intensive medical devices, and First Nations or Métis customers, are eligible for an enhanced amount, which ranges from \$45 to \$75 per monthly bill.
- Eliminating the DRC for residential electricity customers on January 1, 2016. This is saving a typical residential electricity ratepayer who consumes 750 kWh per month about \$65 per year. The DRC will be removed from commercial and industrial and all other users' bills starting April 1, 2018.
- The Northern Ontario Energy Credit (NOEC), which continues to provide targeted assistance to low- to moderate- income individuals and families living in northern Ontario who can be exposed to higher energy costs due to more severe winters and heavier reliance on more expensive home heating fuels.
- The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit (OEPTC), which provides low- to moderate-income individuals and families with relief on the sales tax they pay on energy and with their property taxes.
- The saveONenergy for Home program offered by local distribution companies -- with support from the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) -- offers residential customers rebates on a wide range of energy-efficient products including LED bulbs, power bars with integrated timers and auto-shutoff.
- In addition, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has also implemented a province-wide strategy through the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) that includes access to financial assistance, special rules and conservation programs to help qualifying low-income consumers in critical financial need.

We know that there is more work to be done, and that we must continue to do all we can to bring costs down. We continue to listen to families and businesses in every part of our great province on how we can build on our plan for a system that delivers clean and reliable power for all Ontarians and to extend affordability across Ontario.

The Honourable Glenn Thibeault
Minister of Energy