

Sessional Paper No.P-167

P-167 Petition relating to Industrial Wind Farms (Sessional Paper No. 167) (Tabled by MPP Oosterhoff, April 4, 2017)

Response

Electricity Prices

Over the last decade the government has rebuilt our transmission and distribution grid, invested in clean generation, and closed the last coal-fired power plant. Prices have increased because our energy system is being transformed – more than \$50 billion has been invested to modernize the electricity system.

The government has heard from Ontarians across the province that the costs of these new investments have grown too quickly, which it is moving forward with a plan that would ensure costs are shared more evenly over the years ahead.

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan proposes new measures to lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for residential consumers and hold increases to the rate of inflation for four years, as well as initiatives to reduce costs for businesses. The plan includes the 8 per cent rebate introduced in January 2017 and builds on previously announced initiatives to deliver broad-based rate relief on all electricity bills.

Ontario's clean, reliable electricity system relies on a diverse supply mix, including wind energy. When clean energy from the wind is available, it reduces our need to rely on fossil fuel sources of electricity that contribute to smog, pollution and climate change. Wind energy creates new, high value jobs, and provides economic benefits and opportunities to municipalities and local businesses.

Environmental Approvals

Large-scale wind energy projects are subject to the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) process, which requires proponents to demonstrate that they can meet rigorous standards, based on the best available science, that are protective of human health and the environment. The REA process includes minimum setbacks for wind energy projects, environmental studies and community consultation requirements.

Health Canada Study

On November 6, 2014, Health Canada released preliminary findings from its study into the relationship between wind turbine noise and human health.

Preliminary findings and peer reviewed results from the Health Canada Community Noise and Health Study do not support a link between wind turbine noise and health

impacts including sleep disturbance, chronic health conditions, perceived stress and quality of life.

Property Values

Ontario's Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) undertook a study which concluded that properties near a wind turbine were equitably assessed in relation to homes at greater distances, based on 2016 figures. The study underwent a rigorous independent third-party peer review.

Revised Contracting Process

When communities expressed concerns to us about the electricity contracting process for large renewable energy projects, we listened.

In 2014, the competitive Large Renewable Procurement (LRP) process replaced the Large Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program for future renewable energy projects.

As a cornerstone of the first round of the LRP process (LRP I), mandatory engagement requirements facilitated early relationship-building between the project developer and the local community.

LRP I proponents were required to engage with municipalities and take into account local needs and considerations before proposals were submitted.

Suspension of the LRP II process

On September 27, 2016, the government decided to suspend the second round of the Large Renewable Procurement (LRP II) and the Energy-from-Waste Standard Offer Program, halting the procurement of over 1,000 megawatts of solar, wind, hydroelectric, bioenergy and energy from waste projects.

The decision to suspend these programs followed the release of the Independent Electricity System Operator's (IESO) Ontario Planning Outlook, which indicates the province has a strong supply of reliable power for the foreseeable future and is well-positioned to meet provincial needs until the mid-2020s.

The suspension of LRP II will not affect existing contracts, including those signed last year under the first LRP process (LRP I). Development of these projects will continue, so long as they obtain the required regulatory approvals and any other necessary permits.

Ontario is committed to investing in a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and provides cleaner air for this and future generations of Ontarians.

The Honourable Glenn Thibeault
Minister of Energy