

Friendly Question (Sep 21, 2016):
Electricity Prices and Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy.

Last Thursday, the Minister introduced a new Bill, the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act. The Bill is part of a comprehensive package to reduce electricity rates for Ontario consumers.

Speaker, this government has spent the last ten years making much-needed investments in our electricity system to ensure it is clean, safe, and reliable.

These efforts included completely eliminating dirty coal as a generating source from our system. This remains the single largest climate change initiative in North America, and today our electricity supply is 90% emissions free.

The Minister has introduced legislation as part of a package to build on these efforts, by increasing affordability of electricity for all Ontarians.

Speaker, through you to the Minister, can you please tell this House what the impact of these renewed efforts will be for people across the province?

Word Count: 147

Suggested Response:

Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Member for that question.

There are three elements to our plan to increase affordability for Ontarians.

The first is to rebate the provincial portion of HST off the bills of 5 million families, farms and small businesses across the province. The average savings from this rebate will be about \$130 per year.

The second is to increase support to the most rural customers, in order to help with higher distribution costs in these areas. Together with the first rebate, this will represent \$540 per year in savings for these families.

Third is to expand access for industrial customers to the Industrial Conservation Incentive. Over a thousand Ontario businesses will be newly eligible to this program, which can reduce their bills by as much as one third, while also providing benefits to the whole system by reducing peak demand.

Mr. Speaker, this package of reforms will help to ensure affordable access to clean, reliable electricity for all Ontarians.

Word Count: 163

Supplementary Question:

Thank you to the Minister for those answers. I know that these programs will be a significant step for the families and businesses in my riding.

I understand the measures the Ministry is proposing will be in addition to existing efforts and programs to reduce costs for electricity bills.

This government has taken considerable action to reduce costs at the system level, including renegotiating the Green Energy Investment Agreement – saving \$3.7 billion – and deferring the construction of new nuclear reactors at Darlington – saving \$15 billion.

Just as important as these system-wide efforts are the targeted programs our government offers for families.

Speaker, through you to the Minister, would you inform the House on what pre-existing programs the Ministry offers to Ontario families for their electricity bills?

Word Count: 126

Supplementary Answer

Speaker, as the Member indicated, this government has a number of programs designed to help Ontario families with their bills.

The Ontario Electricity Support Program, introduced this year, provides targeted support to low-income households. More than 135,000 Ontarians are already receiving this benefit.

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Plan, introduced in 2011, is another program designed to help those who need it most. It provides one-time grants of emergency assistance to customers temporarily unable to make ends meet.

Yet another program, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, provides assistance to low- to moderate-income individuals and families living in northern Ontario. Qualifying families receive up to \$224 per year.

Mr. Speaker, the latest proposals by this government build upon this foundation of programs which already exist.

The goal of this government – and my goal as Minister of Energy – is to ensure that all Ontarians have affordable access to our electricity system.

Word Count: 148