

ENE Messaging: Opposition Response to Energy Proposals in Throne Speech

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ISSUE: The electricity rate mitigation proposals announced yesterday in the Throne Speech have been attracting significant attention from opposition and press.

ANALYSIS: Both Patrick Brown and Andrea Horwath devoted time to speaking about the proposals yesterday with the press. Mr. Brown's emphasis has been on calling our initiatives "too little, too late." Ms. Horwath has been claiming that four months is too late for the benefits to kick in. Media responses today have been a bit more varied, trying to draw comparisons between the current proposed HST rebate and the former OCEB benefit, or even with the effects of Cap and Trade on consumer bills.

Our intention for now is to stay focused on our positive messaging as we continue the communications roll-out for this plan, and try to avoid distraction from these criticisms.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Ontario is taking action to reduce electricity bills for families, farms, and businesses.
- We're doing this because we know that families need help with the cost of everyday living. Despite consistent economic growth since the global recession, many families aren't feeling Ontario's resurgence in their everyday lives.
- We also recognize that rebuilding and cleaning up Ontario's electricity system has come at a cost. Over the last decade we've rebuilt our transmission and distribution grid, we've invested in clean generation, and we've closed the last dirty coal-fired power plant. But we need to take the next step in ensuring that clean, reliable system is affordable.
- We're able to take action now because years of careful management is leading to a balanced budget in 2017-18; and we believe that Ontarians should be the first to benefit from the province's fiscal discipline.
- Recognizing this, we are introducing new measures that would take effect January 1, 2017, including:
 - o Rebating provincial portion of the HST to reduce bills by 8% (\$130 annually)
 - o Cutting delivery charges for the most rural customers by 20% (\$540 annually)
 - o Empowering industrial businesses to reduce bills by one third through the Industrial Conservation Initiative
- Taken together, this plan represents one of the single largest actions to reduce costs

for electricity consumers in the province's history. It will provide needed assistance to consumers of all sizes, and it targets support to those that need it most.

- This plan builds on our government's commitment to provide affordable access to energy, including providing support for low-income families, expanding natural gas to more communities, and grid-connecting remote First Nations communities.

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