

Northern response to Horvath

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Hi all, here is a proposed response to Horvath's NR to northern publications, which have been in the Sault Saint Marie area:

New Law protects vulnerable electricity consumers

Yesterday morning we tabled and passed standalone legislation that gave the OEB the power to end winter disconnections in the province of Ontario. The "Protecting Vulnerable Energy Consumers Act, 2017" is a law that everyone can get behind – designed specifically to protect Ontarians, because no one should ever be put at risk of disconnection in the winter.

I'm pleased to say that the Opposition have recognized the importance of this issue, and have supported this Bill through unanimous consent. I would like to thank my counterparts for standing with us on this issue, and supporting a Legislative measure that our Government first introduced in June 2016.

We now look forward to working with the Ontario Energy Board, now that they have received expanded Legislative authority.

While this is a step towards ending winter disconnections in Ontario, we still have work to do on our electricity system. In 2003, it was in dire straits. Many Ontarians remember the era of brownouts and blackouts across the province. We've invested billions to make sure that's an era of the past, and to wean ourselves off dirty coal generation. When we closed our coal-fired power plants we made the air we breathe significantly cleaner – in fact, smog days went from 53 in 2005 to 0 in 2015. Eliminating coal has saved us \$4 billion in annual health care expenses – and saved lives.

We recognize that electricity prices have been on the rise, and more needs to be done to curb costs to families and businesses. Last month, Ontarians around Sault Saint Marie and across the province saw an 8% electricity rebate, and many rural customers are seeing a \$60 reduction on their monthly electricity bill.

Premier Wynne has made it clear that we will take additional action before the spring budget. We're working hard to create real reform for our electricity pricing system, and to bring more rate reductions to Ontarians.

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