

January 23, 2017

Dear Mr. O'Leary,

I am responding to your most recent letter to the Premier, as it related to the electricity system here in Ontario. I noticed a number of troubling false statements and I felt compelled to respond; because I believe that facts still matter in Ontario.

While Ontario's energy plan focuses on providing clean, reliable electricity, I understand you support taking us back to the days of burning cheap, dirty coal. This was made clear when you told us that the end of coal-fired electricity generation was "treacherous, risky, and in my view [and] personal assessment, sheer stupidity"¹. It was also widely reported by Time Magazine that some of your largest financial holdings were in "coal companies and other large polluters"².

The science shows that coal is harmful not only to our environment, but puts a massive strain on our healthcare system. Countries around the world are following Ontario's lead and moving to close down coal plants. Just last week China announced it would cease production on more than 100 coal-fired power projects. It would be irresponsible and out of step for you to suggest a return to dirty coal here in Ontario.

While our government is focused on reducing electricity bills in Ontario for families and businesses, the city you apparently spend most of your time in, Boston, has an average monthly residential electricity bill that is almost 60 per cent more expensive than the median Ontario electricity bill.³ So I would think you know first-hand how much more expensive hydro is in some cities outside Ontario.

As families and businesses across Ontario remember, when our government inherited the electricity system in 2003, brown outs, black outs, and smog days put our economy and our people at risk. Our government focused on fixing that problem – taking that dirty, unreliable electricity system and making it clean – and one we can count on. Due to our action, businesses benefit from a reliable supply of power, and smog days have been reduced from 53 in 2005 to zero in 2015. These actions have reduced the long-term exposure to poor air quality that was threatening Ontarians' health.⁴

We know that the cost of rebuilding and modernizing our electricity system is impacting people in many parts of the province. That's why we introduced new measures, which took effect this January, including:

- Removing all provincial taxes from electricity bills for families, small business and farms, reducing bills by 8 per cent (or \$130 each year for the average Ontario family);

¹ <http://www.bnn.ca/video/ottawa-splanto-phase-out-coal-fired-electricity-will-scare-away-investment-from-canada-o-leary~999822>

² <http://content.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1921635,00.html>

³ https://issuu.com/hydroquebec/docs/comp_2016_en?e=1151578/39216309

⁴ http://14083-presscdn-0-0.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/140411_CleanAirOntario_R003.pdf

- Providing eligible rural ratepayers with additional relief, decreasing total electricity bills by an average of \$540 a year in combination with the 8 per cent rebate; and
- Removing the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC) from residential electricity bills as of January 1, 2016. This saves a typical residential consumer an additional \$65 per year.

We recognize that even with these measures, many families bear a burden that must be addressed. As the Premier and I have said quite clearly, there is more that we have to do and I'm working hard each and every day to provide more relief.

I want to conclude by re-iterating what the Premier said to you in her letter; congratulations on your decision to enter politics. I got into politics to do something, not to be something. Before I was elected for the first time, I served as the Executive Director of the United Way of Greater Sudbury. That experience taught me a great deal, but most importantly, it taught me that governments and elected leaders have a role to play in helping families and building up our communities.

Politics is a vocation, and it's one where what you say has real meaning, and a true impact on the lives of families. I hope you'll keep that in mind as you travel our province and continue on your campaign.

Sincerely,

Hon. Glenn Thibeault

Minister of Energy