

**Back Pocket Remarks - International Plowing Match and Rural Expo Media Avail
Tuesday, September 20, 2016**

- Thanks for being here
- I want to start by thanking this year's hosting partners, especially the Ontario Plowmen's Association
- And the people of Wellington County

It is great to be here today to celebrate Ontario's agricultural sector

- Our province is fortunate to have so many talented, hard-working farmers and an innovative agri-food industry
- Today, Ontario's agri-food sector employs 740,000 people — one in every nine jobs in the province
- And it generates more than \$34 billion annually in commercial activity
- A true pillar of our province's economy

In 2013, I named myself minister to send the message that farmers and food processors are integral to our plan to build Ontario up for everyone

- And I put forward a challenge for agri-food to double the annual growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020
- All signs since indicate that we are on our way to reaching that goal
- Exports have increased and more jobs are being created
- But I know that for a family in rural Ontario, this economic growth doesn't necessarily help with next month's bills
- So we're stepping up our efforts to provide relief for families and business

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- Giving everyone a break by permanently rebating an amount equal to the provincial portion of the HST on hydro bills — an 8 per cent savings
- And we're enhancing support for rural consumers, resulting in further monthly savings of about 20 per cent for eligible customers
- That's approximately \$45 a month, or \$540 a year
- And we're making sure businesses benefit too, by massively expanding the Industrial Conservation Initiative
- That means a thousand more business could save up to 34 per cent by shifting their usage away from peak times and paying lower rates
- Expanding eligibility for the ICI will give agri-food businesses like Ontario's greenhouses the opportunity to save on their power bills and become more competitive
- It is going to support our efforts to expand into new international markets
- And invest in the next generation of technological breakthroughs and advanced methods of farming and processing

I want to thank our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Jeff Leal, for all his work to get us here

- And everyone who works to promote Ontario-grown food through local initiatives
- Happy to take your questions now