

First Nation Leaders Support Wynne Hydro Plan

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TORONTO – First Nation leaders say today's announcement from Premier Kathleen Wynne committing to eliminate hydro delivery charges for on-reserve citizens, among other benefits, is a welcomed announcement that will provide significant financial relief to First Nation communities while strengthening the Political Accord between the Province and First Nations.

"The elimination of the delivery charge will assist our citizens by reducing energy poverty in our communities. It also represents recognition for the use of the land in the development and expansion of the provincial energy grid," said Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day. "Poverty, lack of opportunity and choosing to pay for electricity over food is a reality that affects our people. Today's commitment by the Ontario government is commendable and allows a path forward for greater quality of life for First Nations in Ontario."

Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan announced this morning would lower electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all residential consumers in the province. It will also eliminate the monthly service charge for customers of licensed distributors which charge a bundled rate.

"We appealed to the Wynne government and they responded, not only to First Nations, but to all Ontarians. We acknowledge Premier Wynne and her cabinet for such a bold and humane decision. This demonstrates that the Wynne government is dedicated to reconciliation through meaningful action," said Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians Grand Chief Gord Peters. "We got everything we asked for, plus. This strengthens our Political Accord with Ontario and lays a better foundation for further negotiations."

In June 2016, the Minister of Energy directed the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to examine options for an on-reserve First Nation Energy Rate. Through the fall of 2016, the Chiefs of Ontario in collaboration with the OEB held a series of engagement sessions with First Nations to capture feedback on current hydro rates, ultimately working towards a First Nations specific rate.

Throughout these sessions, it became clear that current hydro rates were unaffordable and creating an additional level of stress within communities dealing with several other socio-economic issues. Participants expressed frustration that First Nation citizens were struggling to afford a service that was built upon the resources identified within their Treaties. Based upon the outcomes of this engagement, the Chiefs recommended that the Delivery Charge be waived for First Nation citizens.

"Each one of our community members will benefit from *Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan*. This is a step towards reconciliation and recognition of our inherent rights as Treaty Holders," said Six Nations of the Grand River Chief Ava Hill. "I am grateful that Premier Wynne and Minister Thibeault listened to

our concerns and took action.”

These changes are expected to be implemented by the summer of 2017.

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