

Ministry of Energy

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Chief Paul Syrette
Garden River First Nation
7 Shingwauk Street
Garden River ON P6A 6Z8

Dear Chief Syrette:

Thank you for hosting our First Nations–Ontario Energy Table meeting on March 10, 2017.

I welcomed the opportunity to continue our meaningful dialogue on energy matters of mutual interest, and from our discussions that afternoon, there were many good ideas brought up that are worthy of ongoing discussion. Together, we are giving life to the 2015 Political Accord.

I am grateful for the hospitality and friendliness extended to our contingent of Ontario representatives by you and the people of Garden River First Nation. I also want to reiterate Ontario Regional Chief Day's sincere condolences on the passing of the young woman from the community and regret that we were unaware of the funeral proceedings that day.

I was pleased to share information about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, which proposes several measures to lower electricity bills for residential customers, including the establishment of a new on-reserve delivery credit for First Nations. Implementing the Fair Hydro Plan will be a vital activity of the ministry over the next few months, and we commit to working together on this major initiative. In particular, I believe an implementation working group for the First Nation Delivery Credit is an immediate action item for us as we seek your advice on how to implement and communicate this important initiative. I will be asking Assistant Deputy Minister Michael Reid to work with Chief Day's office to identify next steps.

As you know, the ministry is also working diligently to review the feedback we received during the extensive Indigenous and public engagements that were held across the province as part of renewing Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan. The input received from First Nation individuals, communities and organizations is critical to informing the policies and programs that will ensure the continued participation of Indigenous communities in the energy sector, including generation, conservation, and major transmission line projects.

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The ongoing involvement of First Nations in the development of a Long-Term Energy Plan is also important and I would take this opportunity to invite you to a “report back” meeting we would like to hold in Sudbury in the next six to eight weeks. We held a similar session in 2013 where we provided a report back on what was heard during the First Nation engagement sessions and to provide a forum for further discussion on energy issues and priorities. This session will also allow us to continue the discussion started at the Energy Table about how to leverage the energy planning work undertaken by many communities and how to translate them into action. Please stay tuned for more details.

Many other issues were discussed and we will continue to give those more thought to identify possible approaches. Work on grievance issues will continue and we will be mindful of the role of Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. Federal commitment to the connection of remote First Nations will be pursued vigorously by all of us. I appreciate your involvement and the open dialogue we fostered during our afternoon together. The Energy Table has been a productive forum for discussions and action. The First Nation Delivery Credit is perhaps the clearest way that our joint action and motivation has resulted in meaningful benefits to Ontario First Nations. The leadership and perseverance on that file is impressive and I am happy that we have been your successful partners in this regard.

We remain committed to ongoing dialogue regarding the unique challenges faced by First Nations in the energy sector. We have much to be proud of in terms of what we have accomplished together, and I look forward to this continued collaboration. We will maintain our work with First Nation partners in securing the historic opportunity for First Nations to participate in the Hydro One share offering. We will work together to help First Nation communities advance their energy goals. And we can continue to showcase for our respective governments how a true Ontario and First Nation partnership model can benefit all parties and fulfil the spirit of reconciliation.

Thank you again and please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,

Glenn Thibeault
Minister