

Milton Champion: Energy minister in Milton to discuss impending hydro bill cut

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Couldn't have written a better story. Well done!

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NEWS Jun 28, 2017 05:15 by [Melanie Hennessey](#) Milton Canadian Champion



Glenn Thibeault, Ontario's energy minister, talks about the Fair Hydro Plan at Milton Hydro Wednesday (June 28). - Melanie Hennessey / Canadian Champion

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault spent the several hours in Milton Wednesday (June 28) to spread the word about the hydro bill reduction set to take effect this weekend.

The provincial politician was joined by Halton MPP Indira Naidoo-Harris in speaking about the previously announced Fair Hydro Plan, which is being implemented in steps.

The pair first visited Milton Hydro and then attended a Milton Chamber of Commerce lunch event at the Teatro Conference and Event Centre, informing those in attendance that as of July 1, Milton households will see an average 25 per cent reduction on their hydro bills as a result of the plan.

"It was through the advocacy of our individual MPPs like Indira, who were bringing forward the concerns of their constituents to myself and the Premier, that we realized we had to act more," Thibeault told the Champion. "There were many people saying, 'I'm concerned about the price of electricity, what's the government going to do about it?' That's when we went to work and we've

come forward with the Fair Hydro Plan.”

In addition to residential hydro customers, the minister said the 25 per cent reduction — which includes the eight per cent rebate that was introduced in January — will also benefit 500,000 small businesses and farms across the province.

The plan will hold rate increases to the rate of inflation for four years.

“Many Ontarians are concerned about the price they pay for electricity and the impact it has on their household budget,” said Naidoo-Harris. “Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan will significantly lower the monthly hydro bills of all residential consumers and help the most vulnerable.”

Thibeault went on to explain the Liberal government’s rationale behind overhauling the province’s electricity generation, transmission and distribution system at a cost of \$50 billion — a price tag that has driven hydro rates.

It all started after the blackout of 2003.

“This happened because of decades of underinvestment in the energy system by governments of all stripes and all colours,” he said.

So the government began investing in “green” energy and chose to close coal plants, he said.

“Ontario’s elimination of coal remains the single largest climate change initiative undertaken in North America,” he said, explaining that it’s equivalent to taking seven million cars off the road.

The measures helped reduce smog days from 53 in 2005 to none last year, noted Thibeault.

“That’s improving the health care of all Ontarians, especially children and our elderly who are most impacted by air pollution,” he said.

While the overhaul has come at a hefty cost, the minister said it’s all worth it when he gets to meet children like 10-year-old Matthew, who suffers from asthma and often couldn’t venture outside to play or even to school due to air quality making his condition worse.

The boy recently went to Queen’s Park to thank politicians for the changes they’ve made to the province’s energy system, telling them that he hasn’t had visit to the hospital in over a year.

“That’s when you go, ‘We’ve made the right decision,’” he said. “We’ve changed his life for the better, and that’s why you get into politics.”

He went on to acknowledge that hydro costs “did increase too much, too fast,” so that’s when the government decided to launch the Fair Hydro Plan and 25 per cent reduction.

“We know this was the relief families here in Milton were asking for,” he said. “It’s a promise that our government is delivering on.”

To accomplish this, he said the government is refinancing the global adjustment — a tool that pays for the electricity system upgrades — and setting a new term that stretches payments out over 30 years, instead of the original plan of 20 years.

“Over time it will cost more and it will take longer to pay off, but it will be fairer because it doesn’t ask one generation, our generation, of electricity ratepayers alone to pay the freight for everyone before and after,” he said. “There’s no question that these changes were the right thing to do.”

At the chamber lunch, Thibeault fielded a mix of technical and general questions on energy and encouraged those in attendance to contact Milton Hydro to discuss further savings that could be offered through the Save on Energy program.

This summer, the Province will also launch an affordability fund for customers who don’t qualify for low-income conservation programs and are unable to make energy-efficient improvements to their home without financial assistance.