

Remarks for Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault
Price Mitigation Event
September 13, 2016
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Thank you [NAME] for that kind introduction.

Good morning/afternoon everyone. Thank you for joining us today.

[Acknowledgments / Location-specific comments.]

As Ontario's new Minister of Energy — and particularly, as a Member of Provincial Parliament representing Sudbury in Ontario's north — I'm proud to be here today to announce our plans to provide rate relief to residential and low volume electricity consumers across Ontario.

I'll get to the details in a few moments, but first, let me provide some context.

When our government came to power in 2003, we committed to providing a safe, clean and reliable energy supply to Ontario homes and families.

And, indeed, over the last 13 years, we have been transforming and modernizing our system.

We replaced coal with a cleaner supply. In 2015, Ontario's electricity generation was over 90% emissions-free.

And Hydro One has enhanced and renewed its transmission and distribution systems, giving us a grid that is "future-ready".

We are proud of that record.

But along with our commitments to safe, clean and reliable electricity, we also committed to an affordable supply.

And I want to assure you that we have not lost sight of that commitment.

Now, I think it's important to note that according to the Financial Accountability Officer, families in Ontario spend less money on electricity on average than in every province except BC, and that total home energy costs are in the middle of the pack when compared to other Canadian provinces.

Our government recognizes that the changes we have made have led to higher costs for Ontario's residential and business customers.

Here I'd just like to note that it's hard to talk about how the average customer is affected, because there really is no single "average" customer.

A family here in the north may heat their home with electricity instead of natural gas.

Rural customers are spread out and so it costs more per customer to deliver their power.

And some families are having a harder time than others making sure all the bills get paid every month.

That's why we understand that we need action for every kind of customer, rural and urban, north and south.

So as we have been building our safe, clean and reliable energy system, we have added price mitigation measures to the programs already in place that help consumers manage their electricity costs.

For example, at the start of this year, we removed the Debt Retirement Charge from residential bills.

And in January, we launched the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which provides ongoing monthly bill payment support to low-income households.

We know that some consumers are still facing challenges.

And our government recognizes we need to do more to ensure an affordable energy system for all Ontarians.

That's why, today, I am proud to announce that we will be introducing legislation that would benefit ratepayers in a lasting, meaningful way.

The proposed Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016 would provide an eight per cent (8%) rebate for about five million residences, small businesses and farms.

If passed, the legislation would take effect on January 1, 2017. That's less than four months from now.

What's more, the proposed legislation is one part of a **comprehensive** package of reforms that would take effect on the same day.

For rural customers, who have been especially affected by increasing costs, we are updating the Rural or Remote Rate Protection. This represents a significant rate relief for Ontario's approximately 330,000 eligible rural electricity consumers. This proposed funding increase to RRRP and the eight percent rebate will result in electricity relief of approximately \$45 per month.

For businesses, we will be lowering the threshold for participating in the Industrial Conservation Initiative from 3 megawatts (MW) to 1 MW. This would give more businesses the incentive to significantly reduce their electricity costs by reducing their consumption during peak hours. This would lower electricity system costs by deferring the need for peaking generation.

And as outlined in the 2016 Budget and the Climate Change Action Plan, the government intends to recycle a portion of the cap and trade auction proceeds to offset the impact of cap and trade on industrial and commercial electricity consumers to keep rates affordable.

Ontario's investments are securing a clean supply of electricity, a grid that's ready for the future, and a healthier environment for ourselves and our children.

The legislation we will be introducing, along with our other reforms, would ensure electricity is affordable for families, farms and businesses across Ontario.

Thank you.