



Standing Committee on Justice Policy regarding Bill 132,:

An Act to enact the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 and to make amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

May 23 2017

Francesca Dobbyn
Executive Director
United Way of Bruce Grey

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today in regard to Bill 132.

The United Way of Bruce Grey is one of many charities and organizations that processes applications from low income energy consumers for emergency assistance.

We have been vocal and pointed in our concerns over the past year in regard to high energy costs. Energy is very much a part of our community as we generate 30% of Ontario's power at the world's largest nuclear station Bruce Power.

We are also home to a few wind turbine and solar farms. And proper farms, with cows and chickens and corn.

We have comprehensive data and we have daily conversations with households struggling with energy poverty.

We are our own subject matter experts. Utility companies are not set up to deliver social programs, regulators are not set up to deliver social programs. Social Services knows how to deliver programs to those they interact with, after qualifying.

Charities and community groups know how to engage a broad community, from those in deep need to those who are coping, but could use a little extra here and there.

We are starting to see positive changes. I have seen 2 Hydro One bills wiped out by the OESP, their bills were less than the credit. We have spoken to people who have commented that it is significant and it is helping.

We have worked closely with the OEB to increase uptake of applications for the OESP, including partnering with local income tax clinics.

The OESP gives us what we've never had before, direct access to verified low income households. We can boost, as was done May 1st, support to these highly specific households with minimal administration.

Putting the cost of the OESP onto general revenue makes sense, all social programs should be funded on the broadest possible base.

Also very relevant to our community is the continued changes to the Rural or Remote Rate Protection (RRRP).

The January reduction was significant and the changes in this bill will continue to ease the burden for rural customers.

Reviewing our data this morning....

EXPLANATION OF SPREADSHEET

We support the changes in Bill 132 and we believe those changes will continue to reduce arrears in the community.

I have also heard a lot, and read a lot of chatter in the media, and I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage everyone in this hallowed hall to ask the question: What would a sustainable, affordable and ethical electricity system look like?

The question of what happens in 4 years, is up to you. You can spend the next 4 years focused on 'gotcha' politics and scoring talking points...does the person with the most Facebook meme likes really win?

Or can we usher in an era of collaboration and innovation?

Energy is a necessity. When the market is allowed to plan, it plans for profit regardless of consequence. When the government plans it plans for the lowest bidder regardless of consequence. When regulators plan, they become mired in bureaucracy and self-service, regardless of consequence.

Let's start looking at a sustainable system that is safe, affordable and innovative and work backwards through the steps to get there in 4 years.

Our experience, our data our team is here to assist in whatever way Queens Park and partners sees fit to use us.