



Office of the Auditor General of Ontario
Bureau du vérificateur général de l'Ontario

**REPORT ON COMPLIANCE
WITH THE GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004, AS AMENDED ON
JUNE 16, 2015 (ACT)**

To Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister of *Energy*

Report on Item OAGO/F0317-19RO Under the *Government Advertising Act, 2004*, as amended on June 16, 2015 (Act)

I have reviewed your 2 English and 2 French radio ads for “Electricity Rate Reduction,” submitted for final review on March 6, 2017. I reviewed these Items in order to assess whether they are in compliance with the *Government Advertising Act, 2004*, as amended on June 16, 2015 (Act).

Ministry Responsibility

The Ministry is responsible for preparing Items in accordance with the Act and submitting Items for final approval to the Auditor General as per Section 4.1 (1) of the Act.

Auditor General’s Responsibility

My responsibility is to issue an opinion on whether submitted Items are in compliance with the Act. My review is limited to confirming that Items:

- include a statement that the Item is paid for by the Government of Ontario;
- do not include the name, voice or image of a member of the Executive Council or of a member of the Assembly as the target audience is located within Ontario;
- do not include the name or logo of a recognized party within the meaning of subsection 62 (5) of the Legislative Assembly Act;
- do not directly identify or criticize a recognized party or member of the Assembly; and
- do not include, to a significant degree, a colour associated with the governing party.

Opinion

In my opinion, based on the advertising material submitted by your office to mine, these Items are in compliance with the Act.

Other Matter

In our opinion, the primary objective of these ads is to foster a positive impression of the governing party. We are concerned that these ads are misleading in suggesting that investments in “clean, reliable energy” were the only factors that led to hydro bills that “have become harder to pay.” As well, with an upcoming general election in June 2018, the commitment that “your bill won’t increase beyond the rate of inflation for at least 4 years” could change. Phrases such as “We’ve heard you,” and “Hydro needs to be fair for everyone” led us to conclude that this campaign is self-congratulatory and aimed at ensuring the government gets credit for its actions on energy prices. We would have found this ad in violation under the prior version of the *Government Advertising Act, 2004*.

Bonnie Lysyk, CPA, CA, LPA
Auditor General of Ontario

March 13, 2017