

## NEWS

# Province proposing more affordable electricity plan for low-income earners

By Michael Gregory

METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

The Province is proposing a new plan to make electricity used by low-income earners more affordable by implementing a monthly credit starting next year, Halton MPP Indira Naidoo-Harris announced recently. "Compared to other residential consumers in the province, low-income Ontarians spend a proportionately higher percentage of their income on electricity per month," Naidoo-Harris said at the Habitat for Humanity Halton/Mississauga location in Burlington.

The proposed Ontario Electricity Support Program will be run through the Ontario Energy Board. On-bill relief for hydro customers will be based on a sliding scale and eligibility determined based on household size and income.

According to the Wynne government, a family of four with an annual income of less than \$28,000, would be eligible for a total annual savings of \$455 annually, or \$38 per month. The Liberals are also eliminating the Debt Retirement Charge, which is expected to save hydro customers \$6 a month.

Both moves would take effect January 1, 2016.

Naidoo-Harris said a low-income family's hydro bill accounts for 10 per cent or more of its total income, on average, when consuming 800-kilowatt hours of electricity per month. Comparatively, a household using the same amount of hydro, but with an income of \$100,000, would find their bill only represents around two per cent of total earnings.

"In this day and age this is simply not acceptable," she said. "Families should never have to choose between putting food on their tables and turning on the lights."

The Liberal's proposal, if approved, will replace the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit that's schedule to end as of December 31.



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