



Hydro One investigation announcement, Feb. 4, 2014

Opening remarks – André Marin

Today, I am launching a systemic investigation of Hydro One that will focus on two key issues: First, whether Hydro One's customer billing practices are transparent, and second, whether Hydro One's process for responding to customer billing concerns is timely and effective.

This investigation is the result of years of behind-the-scenes efforts by my staff to resolve hundreds of complaints, one case at a time. We have helped many people sort out egregious errors and baffling bills. We've worked with senior Hydro One officials to ensure they credit people who were overbilled and don't cut off power to people in need. But the complaints have continued to increase – we are already at almost double last year's amount, and we are only 10 months into the fiscal year.

The stories we are hearing will be familiar to many of you in the media – stories of huge, unexplained “catch-up” bills, multiple bills, or “estimated” bills with no rhyme or reason. And when customers try to get answers from Hydro One, they are stymied – just as my Office has often been stymied when we intervened.

All of this points to potential systemic problems that warrant an in-depth investigation by my Special Ombudsman Response Team.

I have notified Hydro One and the Ministry of Energy of this investigation, and I expect their full co-operation in providing my investigators with interviews and information about Hydro One's billing and customer service operations. Anyone who has information relevant to this investigation is encouraged to complain to my Office.

However, I also want to make clear what this investigation is NOT about. It is not about the price of electricity. It is not about compensation of Hydro One employees. And it is not about municipal utilities like Toronto Hydro, Ottawa Hydro and others.

In order to help the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time, we will focus our investigation on the serious billing and communication issues that customers have raised about Hydro One, and we will complete it within nine months. After that, I will draft a report and recommendations based on the evidence gathered and the response we receive.