

# **Ont Green Energy Act, 2009 to promote renewable energy, create jobs**

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The Ontario government has tabled a *Green Energy Act, 2009* (GEA) that, if passed, would bring sweeping changes across the province - from homeowners to industry.

To make it easier to realize renewable energy projects, the GEA would set a new pricing system, called a feed-in tariff regime, for renewable energy. The government said the new price, which it has yet to announce, would guarantee rates and increase investor confidence and access to financing.

Renewable energy projects would also get a 'right to connect' to the province's electricity grid. The government plans to invest in upgrades to the current grid, which was built to deliver large amounts of electricity from a few big generating stations.

The GEA would also allow renewable energy projects to pass through a streamlined approvals process. The government would appoint a Renewable Energy Facilitator to offer one-window assistance to project developers, cutting through the red-tape that developers currently face.

"One of the frustrations right now has been working with multiple agencies of government and working through multiple processes that seem to have the same intent," said Paul Norris, president of the Ontario Waterpower Association (OWA), one of several renewable energy associations that has applauded the GEA.

Norris said the "one-window approach" to integrating various regulatory approvals would "put some certainty into the process."

The government forecasted that the GEA would create 50,000 'green' jobs in its first three years by setting domestic content requirements of at least 25 per cent for renewable energy and opening up development opportunities in local and First Nations and Métis communities.

But industry would be just one sector to feel the impact of the legislation.

To encourage energy conservation, the government said it would offer incentives like zero or low-interest loans to homeowners for small-scale renewables and homeowners would be required to conduct energy-efficiency audits before selling their houses.

It would also establish energy efficiency standards for household appliances, including efficient water use, while making more energy-efficient products available to more consumers. Ontario's Building Code Act, 1992 would be revised to include energy-efficiency as a main principle.

The public sector would also have to step up under the GEA.

All government buildings would need to meet the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standard. Public institutions like municipalities, universities and hospitals, would be required to develop conservation plans.

The proposed Bill 150 was tabled on February 23, 2009. If passed, it would include amendments to 18 other statutes like the *Electricity Act, 1998*, the *Environmental Protection Act*, and the *Planning Act*. Additional regulatory and policy decisions would also be required.

The Ontario New Democratic Party issued a press release criticizing the proposed Bill for not including minimum targets for renewable energy power.

It also questioned how the bill would stimulate the province's economy without committing to "a minimum 60 per cent Ontario content for green energy inputs," pointing out that Quebec already requires that amount of domestic content in its renewable energy projects.

Ontario Progressive Conservative Energy Critic John Yakabuski asked the government how much the cost of electricity will go up, arguing that in other countries like Germany with similar legislation, the cost of energy is now three times what it is in Canada.

A vote in the Legislature will be held in spring 2009.

Already, several renewable energy associations and First Nations and Métis communities have publicly thrown their support behind the proposed Bill.

But some environmental groups like Greenpeace Canada and the David Suzuki Foundation have said the GEA wouldn't do much to green Ontario so long as nuclear power remains an option in the province.

"The McGuinty government cannot have a serious green energy agenda when it is firmly committed to having 50 per cent of generation coming from nuclear power," Greenpeace Canada said in a news release.

More information on the GEA is available on the [Ontario government's website](#).