

[Transcript] Patrick Brown on AM 900 CHML with Bill Kelly - March 3, 2017

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TRANSCRIPT – Patrick Brown on AM 900 CHML with Bill Kelly – March 3, 2017

MPP: Patrick Brown

Media: Bill Kelly (AM 900 CHML)

[START TRANSCRIPT]

Kelly: Bill Kelly, 900 CHML, we are joined now by Patrick Brown, the Ontario Progressive Conservative party leader and, of course, opposition leader in the Ontario legislature. Patrick, great to have you back on the program. Thanks for the time today.

Brown:
· Always a pleasure to be on your show

Kelly: First and foremost, I guess, your reaction to the Premier's announcement from yesterday?

Brown:
· It's a bandage on a, a bullet hole
· You know, this, this is a Premier that's created this hydro mess we're in

- And I, I, I, I respect the fact that she said 6 times yesterday that they made mistakes and she was apologetic
- But what I'm frustrated about in this plan is: one, we're going to be paying 1.4-billion-dollars-a-year just in interest to pay for her mistakes
- And I'm glad that there's some relief coming, but what I, what I don't like is that the mistakes that caused this are going to continue
- Here we are today and the government's still signing more bad contracts
- FIT-5 proceeds to the next stage today
- LRP-1—which is the big Large Renewable Procurement—is just going, it's going full-steam ahead
- So we have this massive surplus, we charge people for it in their global adjustment
- We're giving it away to our competitors and not only is Kathleen Wynne not willing to look at the 30 big mega-bad-contracts, but she's also, she's also continuing to sign more
- And so, it, it, it's the definition of insanity when you keep on making the same mistake

Kelly: And, and there's a lot of people that share, I think, the frustrations that you're talking about right now and, and the concern and I don't think anybody's arguing with the fact that, you know, rates are going to be lower—that's a good thing—but how we're getting there, obviously, is going to be a problem. But the obvious question, though, Patrick, is we've heard from Andrea Horwath—the NDP plan, and it sounds like they just tore a few pages out of Howard Hampton's book, Public Power, from a few, a few years ago—we've heard from the Premier's plan. What's the Progressive Conservative plan? What's, what's your approach, what's your strategy to try to deal with this problem?

Brown:

- So, in, in, in the near future we're going to be releasing a detailed plan of some of the fixes that we believe are out there
- In terms of the—and I'll make sure I'm on your show that day when we launch our, our, our, our hydro plan—

Kelly: Look forward to it.

Brown:

- --but I would, I would say, the problem with the, with the Liberal and NDP plans is, is, is they're just shell games, they're not looking at the structural problems
- You know, generation is about 60 percent of the bill and we're not—over 60 percent—and we're not having any, we're, we're, we're, we're not dealing with, with, with the generation problem
- And so, I, I, I feel that the other 2 plans are shell games—the NDP and, you know, forcing shareholders to sell shares that have already been sold, that it includes getting Justin Trudeau to take the HST off, off hydro bills when he hasn't agreed to that, it, it, it, it's a wish list, it's unrealistic and it continues to support the disaster of the Green Energy Act
- The Liberal plan is just borrowing into the future and so, what I really want to see happen is, is look at the structural cost of hydro
- I want to—if, if, if this global adjustment is, is a huge issue, and it is, because it, it, it, it, affects everyone's bill, then we have to look at the surplus generation and, and look at, not only look at these bad deals, but make sure that there's no further, you know, being signed

Kelly: Here's the problem with, with what you're saying. Philosophically it sounds wonderful but, but the practicality of this, Patrick—and we've heard this before with campaign promises that were made. You

know, "we were going to scrap the contract with the 407", that was what Dalton McGuinty promised at one time and that hasn't happened. "We were going to go over and do this", "we're going to change this over"—once you're dealing with contracts, you know as well as I do they can be problematic. You can't just rip them up as some politicians like to promise. There are usually penalties involved in this and it could end up costing us a whole lot more—

Brown:

- Yeah

Kelly: --have you looked into that. I mean, did you consider that as a possibility?

Brown:

- It, it, that is, that is definitely a fair comment
- And so the, the reason that we're doing, you know, we're being very detailed in assessing all the damage that's out there
- Of the 30 mega-contracts, we only have 1 copy of 1 contract—we're missing the 29 others and this government won't disclose them
- And, and they do that so, you know, it's more difficult to unravel what they've put together
- On the 30 big—big—mega-renewable contracts, the 1 copy we had an exit clause for a billion-and-a-half
- If there are similar exit clauses in the other contracts, you know, if, if, if we can get out of billions of dollars of surplus, that in itself would, would, would save a lot of money
- The other thing I'd say is aside from these bad contracts—the ones coming forward—legally, if the notice to proceed has not gone out on the construction, because there's going to be this massive new construction under LRP-1 over the next 5 years
- If this notice to proceed hasn't gone out, then you can cancel with, with minimal costs
- But what I, what I can't, what I can't allow to continue is the fact we've given away 6-billion dollars in surplus electricity to our competitors and we charge Ontarians for it
- I can't continue that to—we, we, we, we can't allow that to continue and, and, and that's why we have to really push back against this

Kelly: Well, it's bad enough that we're giving this stuff away but we're doing it for pennies on the dollar. I think that's what really rubs salt on the wound.

Brown:

- In, in, in, in some cases we even pay them to take it and, and I, I also say and it, it, it doesn't smell right here
- I understand why Wynne's not looking at these bad contracts—the 30 mega-contracts for surplus energy in renewables that we don't need, those 30 companies donated 1.3-million dollars to the Ontario Liberal Party, according to Elections Ontario
- I know why Wynne doesn't want to look at those contracts, they're her friends, they're her supporters
- But I don't understand why in a minority parliament and why even today the NDP continues to support the Green Energy Act
- They should, they should walk away from this disaster
- They propped it up during the minority parliament and that's why I say, you know, the Liberals and the NDP—they own this mess that we're in right here

Kelly: When, when you're looking at a proposal—by the way, it's been a rather pathetic situation when we're talking about a 1.5-million-dollar penalty clauses as a, as a better financial plan, but that's the conundrum in which we find ourselves right now. In the short term, Patrick, what's, what's the strategy? Do you look for the, the government to at least declare a moratorium on some of these contracts?

Brown:

- So the contracts they're proceeding with today I have asked the Premier not to proceed with
- It, it, it, it, it's so frustrating—we're paying for old, bad contracts and they're doing the same thing today
- You know, the fact that this is all happening in the same week is, is, is so disingenuous and so, yes, at the, at the very least I want her to cancel FIT-5 and I want her to stop proceeding with LRP-1
- All this new generation that she's putting on the grid that we don't need, has to be stopped immediately
- And, and just so you understand why this is not about green energy, this is about bad deals the Liberals benefited from—water power, water power is green
- We're spilling water power every day
- You, you can't turn off green energy, you can't—it's too expensive to turn off nuclear energy, so what we do is our own water power in Ontario, we mothballed hydroelectric dams up north, we don't run Niagara Falls to full capacity, we're spilling water every day because of these expensive foreign deals that Kathleen Wynne has signed

Kelly: So where do you go for, from today? I mean, obviously the government's made the announcement—these, these reductions that she's talked about, it's really 17 percent, not 25, because 8 percent's already been, that's already there, we've, we've got that already. But so the numbers are the numbers, but do you foresee when, when you do unroll—or roll out, rather—your strategy on this, Patrick, do you, do you see a number there about, about what Ontarians can look forward to as far as reductions, both short-term and long-term?

Brown:

- I do, I, I, you know, the, the Liberals have increased our hydro bills 400 percent since they took office
- A 17 percent increase—decrease—is nice but it doesn't go far enough
- So, yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm, I'm looking at a pretty serious relief and we are, we are going over the details of that plan to make sure that it, everything adds up legally and we're able to, to do this
- But 17 percent is—when they raised our bills 400 percent—is not enough

Kelly: Patrick, I know it's been a busy day and I appreciate you taking the time for us today. And we'll hold a spot for you when you roll out your plan in a couple of days or weeks or whatever it's going to be. And we'll certainly look forward to talking to you then. Thanks so much for this today.

Brown:

- Thank you

Kelly: Take care. Patrick Brown, of course, the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

