
1310 NEWS INTERVIEW WITH PREMIER WYNNE

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1310 NEWS: We are joined now on 1310 News by Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne. Good morning, Premier.

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Good morning, Mark.

1310 NEWS: How are you this morning?

PREMIER WYNNE: Great. How are you?

1310 NEWS: Good thank you. So this change that you've made to electricity bills, you've compared that to refinancing a mortgage. But wouldn't almost every financial planner advise you to pay off your mortgage faster rather than slower?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, yes, if you could afford to do that. And, you know, I think the last conversation we had, Mark, we talked about the electricity cost relief by taking off the 8 per cent, the HST. And we, you know, we discovered, we have discovered, as we moved into that change that people were saying, 'you know what, that's not enough; it's not a fundamental enough change and we still can't afford the increases in electricity costs.' And so that's that's why we have kept looking for other changes that we could make. The reality is that the investments that we've made in the system over the last decade or so are about \$50 billion because that's what was needed, you know, to rebuild the system; whether it was building towers or replacing lines, and there are there are renewable contracts in there as well. But it's a whole suite of things that we we needed to do to build the clean reliable system that we've got now and that's got to be paid off. And, yes, we've been paying it off quickly, but too quickly. We're going to say to the next generation, 'you know what, you're going to benefit from these changes. These assets are still going to be in place and you're going to use some.' And so we're going to spread the cost over, over 30 years rather than 20 years. And that will mean that people now will be able, by the summer, to see an average 25 per cent reduction on their bills.

1310 NEWS: But it also means we'll be paying more. And it's not just the next generation because, as I said earlier today, I hope to still be around in 20, 25 years. So at that time we'll be paying...we'll still be paying some of the costs that that are going to be added to this because of higher or, not higher interest charges, but more interest charges because it's being spread out over a longer period of time.

PREMIER WYNNE: And that's how mortgages work. And, you know, if we if we could, as a society if we could afford to pay it off more quickly, obviously, we would like to do that. But if people can't afford to feed their kids or pay their rent or have a quality of life that is, that is

reasonable, and to pay their electricity bills at the same time, then that's not fair. And so we've got to, we've got to do that, we've got to do that sharing of the cost over a couple of generations.

1310 NEWS: You've said that's what was needed, this \$50 billion in investments. But were there not some decisions in there that were not needed, some decisions your government and the previous government made that were things that we're paying for and we'll be paying for for a long time that were actually mistakes?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I think that the, I think that the challenge on that is that we did need to shut down the coal plants. You're going to see, you know, you're going to see Alberta now move into a period where they're are going to be shutting their coal plants. You're going to see other jurisdictions going where we have already been. And they will, they will then have to replace that power. And they will then have to be building infrastructure, as we have done. So that needed to happen. But what should have happened at that time, if we have 2020 hindsight, is we should have been able to share those costs over a longer period in the first place. You know, we should spread those costs over a longer period and then we wouldn't be seeing the spike in payments that we're seeing right now. So that that was a mistake and if we had it over to do again...if we had it to do over again, we would spread those costs over a longer period in the first place.

1310 NEWS: But again, and I'll leave it after this question, but there were, there were, there were more than just decisions around the elimination of coal-fired energy plants. There were decisions about investing in green energy, about cancelling gas plants, those kinds of things that are part of that \$50 billion that that many people in Ontario feel ended up being a waste of money.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, and, you know, the renewable industry - and we've talked about gas plants and, you know, I've said that there were decisions made there that shouldn't have been made - but if we talk about renewable...renewable energy that's related to the shutdown of the coal-fired plants. So, you know, we have a reliable system now. We buy from other jurisdictions. Other jurisdictions buy from us. So it's not that we have too much energy. We have, we have an adequate supply of energy, which we didn't have in 2003; we had brownouts and blackouts, and the system really was not functioning well. Now we have a reliable system that that is clean. And part of the, part of the response to shutting down the coal-fired plants was getting into cleaner energy that that allows us to have that clean electricity grid.

1310 NEWS: It's clean, but it's expensive, right. The price of electricity has gone up significantly over the past five to 10 years. Much higher than the rate of inflation.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah, but that goes back to the original conversation, Mark. Yes, that's true because we have built new supply. And and the cost, I mean if you think about some of those renewable sources, the cost of solar power has gone down precipitously over the last 10 years, and we knew that was going to happen, as new technologies come online. Also, new technologies are being developed. So things like storage. As we go into developing the new long-term energy plan, you're going to see that there will be, there will be new technologies that weren't even in place 10 years ago, that are now available to us, where we can store some of that wind and solar power, and that again will further reduce the costs. So this is a, this is an ongoing process of developing new technology, finding ways of creating more clean energy. Because, remember, we also made a decision not to build new nuclear. And nuclear and this province has been our baseload. And so we need to make sure that, if we're not going to build

new nuclear that we have other other resources, in order to keep the grid clean and renewable over the long-term.

1310 NEWS: Is there anything that can be done to reduce the cost of producing power, rather than just defer some of the costs that we've already incurred and pay for them later?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I was just, you know, I was just talking about some of the things that can reduce the cost of power, and those are, those are the development of new technologies. What we know is that, that is, you know, that's ongoing. There will be, there will be alternative technologies that will continue to be developed. But the problem that we're having to solve right now, it's my responsibility as the premier to solve, is that there are people in this province right now who are not able to pay for their electricity bills. There are people living outside of urban areas who are carrying an additional burden of or very high distribution charge. And so we're going to address that, as well, and bring those distribution charges down to what an average urban consumer would pay, so that there will be a more standard distribution charge across the province. Those are the immediate problems that have to be solved. And that's what this plan addresses.

1310 NEWS: You're no longer going to be signing new contracts for solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources. Is there anything that can be done with some of the existing contracts? Your opponents, the Progressive Conservatives have said they would they would cancel some of those contracts. So can that actually be done?

PREMIER WYNNE: So we will still...there still will be new contracts, you know. There will be...there's a, there's another microFIT procurement that will go out, small small amounts. As I said, the cost of solar has come way down. Is there a possibility of ripping up those contracts? Well, it could be done, but at a huge cost. We looked at everything, Mark. You know, we looked at all of the options. And I know there's a there's a simplicity in the notion of just ripping up contracts. But there would be legal costs. There would be a long time period to renegotiate, if that was even possible. And the costs that would be borne by the people of the province would be untenable. And on top of that, there would be no immediate relief for people. And that's the, that's the challenge. So, you know, it sounds easy to say, 'just rip up those contracts.' But there's a huge cost associated with that and it's a long...it would be a very long process, if it could even be completed. There are hundreds of contracts; each one of them would have to be dealt with. And it's not practical. And, as I said, we looked at it, we talked to experts, and it really wasn't a practical solution.

1310 NEWS: The changes that you've introduced affect residential electricity consumers. What about businesses who have been saying that the cost of electricity in Ontario, in some cases, is making it hard for them to be competitive? And some of them have said they're no longer investing in this province, they're investing in other jurisdictions because of the cost of electricity.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah. And, you know, the Minister of Energy was very concerned about that. So farms and small businesses, you know, small mom and pop businesses on main street in our communities, those businesses will all benefit from the the average 25 per cent reduction. We've also expanded the program that's called the Industrial Conservation Initiative. It has been in place for large consumers and businesses, and we're expanding it to take in smaller businesses. Now not every single business in the province will will qualify for that, but we have expanded that program. So all businesses in the province will see some reduction. Some will see a greater reduction. And where there are gaps, where there are particular businesses that that are challenged, we'll continue to work with them. You know, what we have seen, over the

last year or so, is that Ontario is leading the country in economic growth. We are seeing businesses coming to Ontario and seeing them expand. But if there are particular industries where there's a particular challenge, we're going to continue to work with them.

1310 NEWS: While we're talking, I wanted to ask you about the issue of how sexual assault cases are prosecuted in Ontario. There's another high-profile case now in Nova Scotia, in addition to the one from from Alberta where people are upset about how a judge handled a particular case and and the words they used in presenting the verdict. And I know this is an issue you've looked at before and you continue to study. How differently do we need to approach these cases? Is the system not set up properly to respect the rights of victims of sexual assault?

PREMIER WYNNE: I think that we've had a history of that being the case, Mark. And in our sexual violence action plan, we actually, we actually brought in changes, both to funding of centres that help people who have suffered sexual abuse, but also into the, into the justice system to put more supports in place for victims. I think that there's more that needs to be done because what we're dealing with is the need for a culture shift, you know. It's a process whereby everybody in the justice system, and outside of the justice system quite frankly, but in the justice system needs to have a better understanding of how victims have been impacted and the kinds of supports that they need. So in our, in our action plan, called "it's never okay," the last page said, "to be continued." So we know that there's more to be done. And these kinds of incidents, like the one that you're talking about, give us more insight into the kind of work and training that needs to happen.

1310 NEWS: But it's not easy is it? We're talking about cases sometimes where there were only two people there, the accused and the and the alleged victim, and the issues of consent are not always easy to understand and to draw very clear lines around.

PREMIER WYNNE: That's exactly true and that's why, that's why training and education of ourselves, you know, and figuring out what policy can actually help in this is so important. And so we have to take lessons from from these incidents, as we continue to develop support for victims and better process in the justice system.

1310 NEWS: Premier Kathleen Wynne, thank you very much for your time this morning.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thanks so much, Mark. Take care.