
CP24 INTERVIEW WITH NDP MPP PETER TABUNS

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STEPHEN LEDREW, CP24: So the Financial Accountability Officer had a report done this morning on the Premier's idea of reducing electrical prices for the next year until the election and she says it's going to cost \$25-billion. He says it's going to cost \$49-billion at least and perhaps up to \$97-billion. Peter Tabuns is the NDP Energy Critic; he joins me right now. Clearly, I mean on one hand you were delighted in this report because it shows that the government was once again stretching it and charging, well, it was going to be charging the people an extraordinary amount of money.

PETER TABUNS, NDP MPP AND ENERGY CRITIC: It's quite a disturbing report. I mean first--

LEDREW: Politically you're glad I guess but it is disturbing.

MPP TABUNS: Yeah, but Stephen I live in this province and frankly if what he's projecting is correct I think it's going to be a tougher province to live in the years to come. First of all, everyone should realize that this is setting us up for soaring rates four years from now right. We're going to have a short-term relief and then the bills are going to go up close to 7-per-cent a year, and that's not counting any other factor. The other thing is, and you've just said it, we're very fearful to find the risk, the financial risk, that we're looking at here. This is an incredibly cynical plan that's been brought forward. The Financial Accountability Officer did an excellent job at getting into that plan and showing what the dangers were, what the risks were. Everybody in this province is having a tough time with higher rates and people should be trying to figure out how to deal with it. That's why the NDP came forward with its plan. You can see it at our website. We're all trying to grapple with it but this is a cynical plan that is going to blow up in Ontario.

LEDREW: Do you think the government, the Liberal Party, knew about this fact that was brought out this morning and just tried to, you know, obfuscate to try to hide it?

MPP TABUNS: Yeah--

LEDREW: Or are they just wrong?

MPP TABUNS: No, they knew what was going on. There was that leaked document, what was it a week ago-- a little over a week ago? So they knew that the prices were going to go down for a while and then they were going to shoot up and that we'd have this big overhang of debt for decades, decades.

LEDREW: As a politician, how do you judge them in the sense that they are pulling out this plan saying, well we're going to give you some short-term relief but it's going to cost you more. I mean, do people buy that bologna?

MPP TABUNS: I don't think that they do. I mean this is an extraordinarily cynical government. Let's be very clear about this--

LEDREW: The Premier doesn't come across as cynical.

MPP TABUNS: No she doesn't--

LEDREW: She comes across as a well-meaning woman, and then the government comes up with this stuff, you know that's just--

MPP TABUNS: Well she is the government, let's face facts. And she can present very well but this is a very cynical ploy and I think people will see through it. When I talk to people and I explain that four years from now the bills are going to shoot up again they get very disturbed. They don't want the bills to shoot up. They need the relief but they don't want to be in a situation where a few years from now suddenly their bills are going through the roof again and much worse than it is now.

LEDREW: So the whole plan to bring forth this action is the government wants to reduce electoral bills for the next year. That's a piece of legislation and where is that now because it was brought in about two weeks ago wasn't it?

MPP TABUNS: It was but we have something in the legislature called time allocation. So the government has set deadlines. They're jamming it through. We're having committee hearings this week. Next week we're going to go to a third reading. It's going to be done before the break, June 1st.

LEDREW: So you can't, you know, through parliamentary rule maneuver this around and delay it and so on--

MPP TABUNS: No, no, they really put on a straight-jacket on the legislature. They made sure they could jam it through in a very short number of days. We debated it for a few hours. When we get through the committee process where we're supposed to amend it, and I don't think there will be much amending, I think we've got about an hour debate total for the bill. And again, \$45-billion, a big debt that Ontario's going to take on that people are going to have stuck on their hydro bills for decades, you have two weeks debate? Really, seriously, come on--!

LEDREW: But that's all you want because it's quite clear what the whole plan is. I mean what you're saying by debate, you're saying well we'd like to stop it, but I mean what are you going to debate? You know what they're going to be doing with it. You know when it's going to--

MPP TABUNS: But I think the people of Ontario deserve to have a say when you have a big decision like this. I mean this is not a small thing; we're not talking about dog park. We're talking about big bucks that are going to shape the economy for decades. And yeah you're right, for their purposes, the quicker the better; less discussion, less awareness, they're happy.

LEDREW: There's a quote: Peter Tabuns, 'dog park'. Okay, lovely chatting with you. Okay thanks.

MPP TABUNS: Thanks very much Stephen.