

MEDIA EVENT: NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH NEWS CONFERENCE ON PROVINCE'S HYDRO PLAN

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Date: Mon, 15 May 2017 11:56:32 -0400
Attachments: May 15 - NDP Leader Andrea Horwath News Conference On Province's Hydro Plan.doc (78.34 kB)

MEDIA EVENT: NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH NEWS CONFERENCE ON PROVINCE'S HYDRO PLAN May 15, 2017

Time / Location:
10 a.m. / Queen's Park Media Studio

Speaker:
NDP Andrea Horwath

Media Attendance:
Print – 5
TV -3
Radio – 0

Media Outlets:
Smith Cross – CP; Ferguson – Star; Jeffords – Sun; Nanji– QP Briefing; Brule - Radio Canada/CJBC;
Fitzpatrick – CBC Online; Global; Tumelty - City TV

Statement by Horwath:

Good morning everyone. Last week, we heard just how much of other people's money Kathleen Wynne is willing to spend to buy votes. As you know, leaked internal Liberal cabinet documents show that Premier Wynne's borrowing scheme will cause hydro bills to soar, increasing by over 50 per cent over the next decade. I think people know that one way or another, they would pay the price. They would pay the price for Kathleen Wynne's latest move on hydro. But the price she's expecting us all to pay with this plan is truly disturbing. I asked the Premier two months ago – in fact, I asked the Premier two months ago today to show some respect for the people of Ontario and not bring this bill forward at the very last minute. Clearly, that – that request was ignored. With just eight sitting days left, people will not have a chance to look at this deal or send feedback to the government. Even more troubling, Wynne's energy minister said Thursday that there are more secret documents with even further projections on how much this Liberal hydro plan is going to cost ratepayers.

I called our caucus together this morning for a meeting to discuss Wynne's bill. Although we've asked the Financial Accountability Officer to look at just how much this is going to cost people, the bottom line is this. The NDP can't and won't vote in favour of this Liberal hydro scheme. We will not vote in favour of increasing people's hydro bills. We will vote against Wynne's hydro bill. There's nothing the NDP or anyone can do to stop Kathleen Wynne from using her majority to plow ahead with this plan and cause hydro bills to soar even more after the election. The cabinet leak makes it clear that this is a \$40-billion attempt to buy an election. That's 40 times what they spent to buy an election by cancelling gas plants. Frankly, although it's no surprise, I'm disgusted by Kathleen Wynne's priorities. Votes for herself, not affordability for families who are struggling.

The NDP has a plan to get hydro bills down by at least 30 per cent, and keep them down. That includes putting Hydro One back into public hands. That's the plan that I'm fighting for. And the best plan for families and businesses. And I'm 100 per cent committed to implementing that plan should we form government next year. Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal government just don't seem to get it. Ontario businesses and families can't afford today's bills. They can't afford their hydro right now, and they certainly can't afford more Liberal hydro hikes in just a few years' time. Those are my formal comments. I'll take any questions.

Q: Ferguson: Looking at how much rates are going up, I mean that would be, just to be devil's advocate for a moment, that would be not unusual, it's not unusual for prices to rise over time as you know. So are the hydro rate increases doubling in ten years is that so outrageous?

Well look I mean the hydro bills have gone up 300 per cent since the Liberals took office. They've gone over up over 50 per cent just since Kathleen Wynne became the Premier of this province that's far greater than inflation. And I can tell you people's wages haven't gone up by 300 per cent. People haven't seen 300 per cent increases in their pension checks. So absolutely it's not acceptable that Liberals pretend that they're going to get people's bills down with this hydro plan. But really in hidden documents that were leaked we find out that in fact those bills are going to skyrocket shortly after the next election. That is not acceptable and that is not the plan that the people of this province need.

Q: Jeffords: (Inaudible) and there's another mention of it in this letter to the Minister. Are you hoping he will release more of these drafts or more and more details around their plan in the week of the vote?

Look I think it is unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable that the Liberals are launching this plan without giving the people of Ontario the true facts about what this plan is going to do. I mean it is unacceptable. Since when is government supposed to be bringing forward plans without providing information to the people of Ontario. We have asked now the Financial Accountability Officer to have a look at whatever documents are possible to look at presently and we know there aren't very many. But we're what we're asking is Mr. Thibeault to come clean. We're asking the government to come clean, to do the basic fundamental thing that any government should do, which is provide the information to the people of Ontario. And we want them to release all documents to the FAO so that he can do a proper unbiased independent analysis about their plan.

Q: Ferguson: Are you worried at all that by voting against this bill the Liberals would turn it against you and say you're trying to vote against the hydro cut?

Well look. I mean I think people in this province know very well that this government is trying to ram this thing through the house before people have a chance to look at it. We also know from those leaked documents and that this plan is going to raise people's hydro rates shortly after the election's over. We know that this plan also continues to sell off Hydro One which is something that 80 percent of Ontarians don't want. So the Liberals can play whatever political game they want but New Democrats will not in good conscience vote for a bill that continues to put Ontarians and businesses in Ontario at risk of skyrocketing hydro bills. It's not acceptable. They can't afford their bills now. And I think most people don't trust the Liberals anyways and I don't blame them for not trusting the Liberals. We certainly don't.

Q: Nanji: The government house leader has extended the sitting for the next week until midnight. Would that maybe be enough time to debate this bill?

Well you know it's not just a matter of the Legislative Assembly reviewing this legislation and the impacts. People need to get a sense of what this is all about. People need to have the time to look at how this plan is going to affect them. They need to have the time to understand it, digest it. They need to have the time to phone their MPP or send an e-mail or a letter to the Premier. I mean by them being so disrespectful and ramming this through the legislature at the last minute shows that they have something to hide. And this is exactly why two months ago to this day I asked them to table their bill. Because I've got that Premier's number. I've got that Liberal government's number and I think most Ontarians do as well. They will hide anything if it means that the truth won't come out and they can ram their legislation through the house and then the impacts will be what they will be. People will suffer. But Liberal insiders will do very very well. That's what this bill is all about. And that's what the Liberals time in government has been all about. Liberal friends and insiders, bankers, people at the top are doing very very well. But everyday families are struggling just to pay the bills. Small businesses are closing their doors because they can't afford electricity and Premier Wynne's Ontario. Not acceptable. And what the leaked document show is more of the same coming down the pike. Relief for a couple of years and then boom those bills go right back up again to a even higher than they are now and people can't afford them now. So yes we're very proud not to support this bill and the Liberals can play any games that they want. This is not good legislation for the people of Ontario. This is not a plan that will fix the broken electricity system here in Ontario.

Q: Fitzpatrick: Tonight your deputy leader is making an announcement. Hypothetically speaking if he is to announce that he's running for the federal NDP leadership, what's your reaction to that and what impact will his absence over the next few months have on your party?

Well, I'm going to you know, wait for Jagmeet to make his announcement this evening. I am going to wait for him to have his say before I speculate any further on where things will be after that announcement. So I

am going to kind of refrain from having that discussion until after he has had a chance to make his announcement this afternoon, evening.

Q. Nanji: (inaudible) MPPs to resign their seat or they are seeking just generally speaking, would you accept (inaudible)?

Now again, I think that we will wait and see what happens with Jagmeet and once he has made his decision clear, once he has made his announcement this evening we will be able to have the larger discussion.

Q. Tumelty: Have you had a conversation with him?

I have had many conversations with Jagmeet. I've had many, many conversations with Jagmeet about his future but I am going to leave it to him to be able to share those announcements or that announcement that he is going to be making this afternoon with the public.

Q. Ferguson: Has he told you though, has he told you?

Again Jagmeet and I talk regularly but I am going to leave it to him to make it his announcement this afternoon.

Q. Ferguson: I'm not asking what his decision is I am just asking if he has told you what his decision is?

Are you going to give me like, water torture or something? But Jagmeet has been very open with me and we've talked many, many times so I'm going to leave it to him to make his announcement this evening and look forward to hearing what that is with everyone else.

Q. Fitzpatrick: How has he performed as a deputy leader so far? And just in general as an MPP what effect has he had on the party so far?

Jagmeet has been an excellent member of our team. He is certainly done a lot of hard work to engage young people with our party, to engage folks in the broader GTA with our party. He has been an excellent critic. He has done great work on the carding file. He has done great work on the anti-racism file. He has done great work as an advocate to crack down on temp agencies, to make sure that we deal with the erosion of the quality of work in this province. But so has everyone on our team. I mean our members work very, very hard; all of them. They take their roles and their critic roles as well as their roles as representatives of the ridings very, very seriously and as a result no New Democrats come here and fight for everyday people. Jagmeet has been able to do that very successfully as has the – as have the other 18 member of our caucus.

Q. Fitzpatrick: He has climbed the ladder quite fast coming from (inaudible) to becoming the deputy leader. Did you see that with Jagmeet coming – getting to a name for himself quickly?

Well I mean you know there's no doubt that the position of deputy leader is one that has helped Jagmeet in his work but it has also helped the NDP and so it was a mutual relationship. It still is a mutual relationship and I look forward to hearing what his public announcement is this evening but certainly I have been you know, proud of the work that he has done and I am proud of our entire caucus. We work hard for the people of Ontario. That's what New Democrats do.

Q. Tumelty: Should a sitting MPP resign if they run for another job in (inaudible) political spectrum?

Well again, that's not what the rules require but certainly there will be I think a decision that will be made, an announcement that will be made this afternoon and following that will be probably you know, talking about this a little bit more tomorrow. But nonetheless I think we should just let Jagmeet have the space that he is going to need this afternoon, this evening to make his announcement and we will have a further discussion tomorrow.

Q. Smith-Cross: When Cheri Di Novo said that she is going to run for the leadership you told us that you were going to have a discussion with her to see if she would be able to fulfill her role as an NDP MPP while running for the leadership. Is that the kind of discussion you've already had with Jagmeet?

As I said I am going to avoid you know, stomping on Jagmeet's decision. His public announcement this afternoon I'm going to you know, kind of step back and let him make his announcement this afternoon, this evening and then we can probably have further discussions tomorrow.

Q. Smith-Cross: Will you be there?

I don't believe so. I have another engagement. Thanks.

Q. Ferguson: Are you neutral in the race by the way?

Yeah I always am. Same with last time and (inaudible) federal members and so I think that they should have their chance to make their decisions without going to (inaudible).

N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes

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