

TV Transcripts: CP24 Interviews with MPP Smith and MPP Tabuns (May 24)

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CP24 INTERVIEW WITH PC MPP TODD SMITH

Date: May 24, 2017
Station: CP24
Length: 3:18 minutes
Speaker(s): Todd Smith, PC MPP

STEPHEN LEDREW, CP24: Well, we're back on hydro again. As promised, Todd Smith is a PC energy critic. He joins right now. We just heard from the NDP. They don't like it. But I mean people are just flabbergasted by these costs. Were you flabbergasted by it? Or did you sense that they were undercutting these costs?

TODD SMITH, PC MPP: Well, you'll recall I was here a couple of weeks ago with that whistle-blower document.

LEDREW: Yeah, I recall that very well. You are not forgettable.

MPP SMITH: The Financial Accountability Officer basically just confirmed everything that was in that document, but then when a little bit further and talked about the total cost, right. So \$45 billion total cost, if we balance the budget every year until 2045, and if interest rates don't go up. So I mean, worst case scenario, this is \$93 billion, he says, according to his numbers.

LEDREW: And that's conservative. So it could be, you know, like I mean, in 20 years who knows, it could be 120 to 200 billion.

MPP SMITH: Right.

LEDREW: I mean, how is anybody to believe, first of all, what this government says when they...the Premier has said 25 billion. She said, 'I know that's hard to swallow, but it's going to give you relief now.' And now that is twice that much.

MPP SMITH: Pretty expensive for instant relief. And, you know, yesterday we were in committee - and I know Peter was just talking about that - we were in committee on Bill 132, which is this unfair hydro bill. And energy experts were saying the reason we went down this road was because the government wanted to remove electricity as an issue for the upcoming election, as quickly as possible. So there were other ways that actually could have reduced hydro bills, but it would have actually taken some time. It would have actually taken some negotiations and some work, and the government didn't have time for that. The election's a year away. They want this to go away now.

LEDREW: How do you think they thought they could get away with it because they know there's a Financial Accountability Officer out there? They know that he is going to be there with his accountants looking at this. They know that the costs were higher.

MPP SMITH: Well, keep in mind the FAO released his report as a request from the NDP after the whistle-blower gave us the document. So I don't know if the government actually thought that

maybe they could hide this from the taxpayers and ratepayers of Ontario because, keep in mind, it's the ratepayers, the electricity customers who are actually going to pay more for this. The price of electricity goes up 6.5 percent per year in four years time, and then 12 per cent a year in 10 years' time. So I mean we're going to see massive, massive hikes in electricity. This doesn't fix any of the problem.

LEDREW: So, Todd, I mean do agree that the Opposition, you the NDP can't do anything about this right now? You can't stop this bill.

MPP SMITH: No. I mean, the government has a majority, you know. It's in committee now for today and tomorrow.

LEDREW: Don't you wish you had a Senate here. You could send it to the Senate and they could (inaudible) forever.

MPP SMITH: A sober second thought would be nice on this. And they're rushing it through. They're giving us 10 minutes to debate this at committee...or sorry, at third reading next week. And the Auditor General appeared at committee today and she said, she told the committee, 'I can't sign off on this plan; this doesn't mean accounting standards; I would not sign off on this plan.' So this not only has an impact on electricity customers, this could have a serious impact on the province's finances moving forward.

LEDREW: So is this going to be...is this going to be Todd Smith's talking point between now and a year from now, when we have an election?

MPP SMITH: The unfair hydro plan is unfair not just to this generation, but to our kids' and our grandkids' generation because when you're talking about 2045, I will have grandkids by then. And they're going to be paying for this. It's unbelievable. It really is. And we've got 30 minutes of debate a third reading.

LEDREW: It is. It's of biblical proportions. Unbelievable. Todd, thanks very much. Good to see you again.

CP24 INTERVIEW WITH NDP MPP PETER TABUNS

Date: May 24, 2017

Station: CP24

Length: 4:21 minutes

Speaker(s): Peter Tabuns, NDP MPP

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.