

Transcript: Premier Wynne's Remarks at Hydro Ottawa - September 16, 2016 ***With Attachment

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PREMIER WYNNE'S REMARKS AT HYDRO OTTAWA

Date: September 16, 2016
Length: 8:17 minutes
Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Thank you very much, Bob. It is a great pleasure to be here with everyone. This is a great place to be able to talk about electricity prices today. But I want to thank all of the folks working here for letting us interrupt. Appreciate that. And Bryce, thank you for welcoming us in for the tour. It is great to be here and this is a historic institution for the country and the province. Ottawa was home to Canada's first water powered generating station. That is part of the history and in 1885, Ottawa became the first city in the world to light all of its streets with electricity. It kicked off a period of our history in which we literally invested in a brighter future. But these investments did not continue through the twentieth century. By the start of the century, Ontario's electricity system was crumbling. Infrastructure was failing. We were still depending on dirty coal so we started to build a clean, reliable grid to power the future for Ontario because at the beginning of this century, that was what was required. And two years ago, we became the first place on the continent to completely eliminate heavy polluting coal fired electricity. That saves about \$4 billion a year in health and other pollution related costs. Today, more than 90 per cent of Ontario's electricity is emissions-free.

(Speaking French) Today more than 90 per cent of Ontario's electricity is emissions free.

I think that is something we can all take pride in. We are leading in the fight against climate change and we are very well positioned for the low carbon economy of Toronto – of tomorrow.

(Speaking French) We are well prepared for the low carbon economy of tomorrow.

I have to say, when I was in Paris last year and I had the opportunity to talk to leadership from national jurisdictions and subnationals from around the world, many of them were looking to Ontario for the work that we had done as we discussed what the steps were necessary in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and looking to Ontario to talk about how we had shut down those coal fired plants and what we had done to replace that electricity and the impact that that was having. So we talked about the health costs and we talked about how we had moved from, really, air that was susceptible to smog days, to clean air. At the same time, we talk about and we have to talk about the cost of building clean and reliable power after decades of neglect. What that has done, that necessary investment - it has pushed hydro rates up. This added to the pressures that households and businesses have been under as Ontario's economy recovers from the recession, has meant that there is a burden that people and businesses are carrying. So we began to take actions to keep the cost of electricity affordable. We removed the debt retirement charge from residential electricity bills and the man standing right beside me led in many of these decisions. We made electricity more affordable for low income families through the Ontario Electricity Support Program.

We took action to help people with conservation and we renegotiated the Samsung agreement to save \$3.7 billion. That cost came out of the system. But even with the cost that we have taken off your bills and out of the system, electricity prices have continued to rise here, just as they have across Canada and around the world. I have heard from people in the Ottawa region and from every region across the province that it has become too much. We have listened to those concerns, because it is not just an electricity issue. People need more help with the cost of living and it is my job – it is our job - to give people that break wherever we can. So our plan has helped Ontario's economy emerge as one of the fastest growing, but I know that for a family, that one or two or three per cent growth doesn't necessarily help with next month's bills. That overall growth is a pretty abstract idea when families are trying to figure out how to make ends meet. We get that. But for the province, every extra bit of growth allows us to find more ways of helping people in their daily lives. Right now, a stronger economy means that we can help make that day to day living more affordable. That is why jobs, the creation of jobs and economic growth are my top priority. And it is why yesterday, we introduced legislation that would, if passed, permanently provide a rebate on people's electricity bills all across Ontario.

(Speaking French) If it is adopted, the bill we introduced will permanently provide a rebate on people's electricity bill across Ontario.

The Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act would rebate an amount equal to the provincial portion of the HST directly on electricity bills. So just to be clear, that 8 per cent comes off right away. So it is not that people pay it and then they get it back. It will come right off their electricity bills from the beginning and it will do that for millions of families, for farms, small businesses, and that is an 8 per cent savings every month. That will create an average savings of about \$130 a year per household. But we knew that there needed to be some additional measures, particularly for rural delivery charges, which I heard a lot about, we have heard a lot about over the past few months. What that will mean is that decreasing rural delivery charges will mean that eligible customers in rural Ontario would save a total of \$540 annually on average. To ensure that businesses are also benefitting from lower energy costs, because we have heard and Bob has heard this for some time, it is not just residents, not just individuals, but also businesses. So in order to help businesses, we are also going to massively expand the Industrial Conservation Initiative, or ICI. This program already helps about 300 businesses to save up to 34 per cent of their costs by shifting usage away from peak times and paying lower rates. The ICI is great for business and for all of us because it means that we do not need to build as much peak generating capacity. So the expanded ICI would be available to an additional 1,000 businesses of various sizes across all of Ontario. We have done that by changing the eligibility from 3 to 5, down to 1 megawatt. So that includes about 1,000 businesses that would be eligible.

(Speaking French) 1,000 large hydro consumers would also have the possibility of reducing up to a third of their hydro costs.

So, more people will have help in their day to day lives because of these decisions. And more businesses will have the opportunity to compete and to grow because they will be able to save and then reinvest in their businesses. That is what a balanced plan to build Ontario up for everyone does. It looks at the challenges that are being faced by people across the province and adapt and make changes that address those challenges. So that is what we are doing. I want to thank you all for being here. And to my team, thank you for the work that you are doing. And to Hydro Ottawa, thank you very much.