

Hansard: Bailey to Thibeault -- Energy Rates

From: Energy In The News (ENERGY) <energynews@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations" <mei-comm-issues_and_mediarelations@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Adi, Sana (ENERGY)" <sana.adi@ontario.ca>, Alexandra Campbell (IESO) <alexandra.campbell@ieso.ca>, "Armstrong, Hillary (ENERGY)" <hillary.armstrong@ontario.ca>, "Berg, Denna (ENERGY)" <denna.berg@ontario.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Carson, Cheryl (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <cheryl.carson@ontario.ca>, "Cayley, Daniel (ENERGY)" <daniel.cayley@ontario.ca>, "Chaput, Kaitlin (ENERGY)" <kaitlin.chaput@ontario.ca>, "Cindric, Christina (ENERGY)" <christina.cindric@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Dade, Christine (ENERGY)" <christine.dade@ontario.ca>, Darren Matsugu (IESO) <darren.matsugu@ieso.ca>, "Diamond, Alyssa (ENERGY)" <alyssa.diamond@ontario.ca>, "Dier, Kirby (ENERGY)" <kirby.dier@ontario.ca>, Donna Kinapen (OEB) <donna.kinapen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Feather, Adam (ENERGY)" <adam.feather@ontario.ca>, "Flannery, Catherine (ENERGY)" <catherine.flannery@ontario.ca>, "Gibbs, Diana (ENERGY)" <diana.gibbs@ontario.ca>, "Hill, Allyson (ENERGY)" <allyson.hill@ontario.ca>, "Ho, Larissa (ENERGY)" <larissa.ho@ontario.ca>, "Hume, Steen (ENERGY)" <steen.hume@ontario.ca>, "Imbrogno, Serge (ENERGY)" <serge.imbrogno@ontario.ca>, "Imlay, Patrick (ENERGY)" <patrick.imlay@ontario.ca>, John Bozzo (OEB) <john.bozzo@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, John Cannella (IESO) <john.cannella@ieso.ca>, "Johnson, Paul (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <paul.johnson3@ontario.ca>, Jordan Penic (IESO) <jordan.penic@ieso.ca>, "Kacaba, Jennifer (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <jennifer.kacaba@ontario.ca>, Karen Evans (OEB) <karen.evans@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Katona, Keley (ENERGY)" <keley.katona@ontario.ca>, "Kitchen, Matthew (ENERGY)" <matthew.kitchen@ontario.ca>, "Landmann, Peter (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <peter.landmann@ontario.ca>, "Latto-Hall, Arla (ENERGY)" <arla.latto-hall@ontario.ca>, "Lazakis, Chloe (ENERGY)" <chloe.lazakis@ontario.ca>, "Leung, Thomas (ENERGY)" <thomas.leung@ontario.ca>, "Lina Buccilli (Lina.Buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca)" <lina.buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Lindsay, Ken (ENERGY)" <ken.lindsay@ontario.ca>, "Linnington, Brenda (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <brenda.linnington@ontario.ca>, "Lyon, Sam (ENERGY)" <sam.lyon@ontario.ca>, "Major, Candace (ENERGY)" <candace.major@ontario.ca>, Mary Bernard (IESO) <mary.bernard@ieso.ca>, "Moulton, Dan (ENERGY)" <dan.moulton@ontario.ca>, "Naveed, Fatima (ENERGY)" <som.fatima.naveed@ontario.ca>, Neal Kelly (OPG) <neal.kelly@opg.com>, "Nelms, Scott (ENERGY)" <scott.nelms@ontario.ca>, "Nutter, George (ENERGY)" <george.nutter@ontario.ca>, "O'Donnell, Cheryl (ENERGY)" <som.cheryl.o'donnell@ontario.ca>, "O'Riordan, Eamon (ENERGY)" <eamon.o'riordan@ontario.ca>, Paul Crawford (OEB) <paul.crawford@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Pelkey, Bryan (ENERGY)" <bryan.pelkey@ontario.ca>, "Pitkeathly, Doreen (ENERGY)" <doreen.pitkeathly@ontario.ca>, "Poirier, Linda (ENERGY)" <linda.poirier@ontario.ca>, "Ramcharran, Shanice (ENERGY)" <som.shanice.ramcharran@ontario.ca>, "Rehob, James (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <james.rehob@ontario.ca>, "Reid, Michael (ENERGY)" <michael.reid@ontario.ca>, Richard Mackie (OPG) <richard.mackie@opg.com>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, sandra.dykxhoorn@opg.com, "Sermat-Harding, Kaili (ENERGY)" <kaili.sermat-harding@ontario.ca>, "Shear, Dan (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <dan.shear@ontario.ca>, "Simmons, Valerie (ENERGY)" <valerie.simmons@ontario.ca>,

"Spence Lair, Marlo (ENERGY)" <marlo.spencelair@ontario.ca>, "Spence, Marcia (ENERGY)" <marcia.spence@ontario.ca>, "Stoiko, Andrea (ENERGY)" <andrea.stoiko@ontario.ca>, "Sweet, Edward (ENERGY)" <edward.sweet@ontario.ca>, "Syed, Usman (ENERGY)" <usman.syed@ontario.ca>, Sylvia Kovesfalvi <sylvia.kovesfalvi@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, Ted Gruetzner (OPG) <ted.gruetzner@opg.com>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Erin (ENERGY)" <erin.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Todd, Brian (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <brian.todd@ontario.ca>, Tom Bergen (OPG) <tom.bergen@opg.com>, Vanda Wall (OEB) <vanda.wall@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Visheau, Vanessa (ENERGY)" <vanessa.visheau@ontario.ca>, "Waddell, Colleen (ENERGY)" <colleen.waddell@ontario.ca>, "Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)" <matt.whittington@ontario.ca>, "Whytock, John (ENERGY)" <john.whytock@ontario.ca>, "Wright, Lindsay (ENERGY)" <lindsay.wright@ontario.ca>, "Xavier, Katrina (ENERGY)" <katrina.xavier@ontario.ca>, "Yadav, Saurabh (ENERGY)" <saurabh.yadav@ontario.ca>

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Bailey: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Minister of energy. Families in Sarnia-Lambton can't afford their hydro bills. Thousands of families in my community are in arrears. Residents have been bringing hydro bills in my office that are six, seven, \$800 per month. Local service agencies and nonprofits and service clubs are struggling to keep their doors open. Small business and local industry are powering down investment and expansion plans because they fear this government's policies. Billions of dollars in investment and economic impact are at stake in Sarnia-Lambton. Minister your 8% rebate is just a band-aid solution that won't stop the bleeding. Rates are still going up. Minister, when will you announce real relief for hydro rate increases for the families and businesses in Sarnia-Lambton who struggle to pay or simply can't afford their energy bills?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable member for his question. I was just in the great riding of Sarnia a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, working with union gas and learning about the don hub and I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's a great community and lots of investment going on and lots of businesses growing in that sec tomorrow. I know he should be very proud of that, Mr. Speaker, because the investments that we're making in terms of helping small businesses, Mr. Speaker, that 8% reduction will actually help many small businesses. And if they actually use more than a megawatt of power, Mr. Speaker, over 1,000 more businesses right across the province will actually now be able to participate in the I.C.I. Program, Mr. Speaker. The program does two things, Mr. Speaker. First thing it does, Mr. Speaker, it helps lower rates for these businesses between 14 and 34%, Mr. Speaker. That's one third. And also, Mr. Speaker, the I.C.I. Program actually reduces the amount of usage during our peak. Which actually helps the entire system, Mr. Speaker, which keeps rates lower for everyone, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

>> MPP McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. Residents and businesses in Stormont- Dundas and south Glengarry are struggling to keep their heads above water because of unaffordable hydro bills. Mom and pop shops in small towns are being forced to close because they can't afford to keep the coolers on. One such store owner, the hydro bills were over \$4,300 a month. He'll be forced to close after 30 years in service. Residents are in dire financial straits and are facing disconnections due to sudden increases, and they can't afford them, especially on fixed incomes. My question to the **Premier** is simple. She knows what's causing this hardship across the province, and today's announcement does nothing for my riding. Will she commit to stopping the construction of the four unaffordable wind and solar projects in Stormont- Dundas and south Glengarry?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's announcement is good news for consumers right across the province, Mr. Speaker. We've actually reduced \$3.8 billion, Mr. Speaker, by actually suspending the L.R.T. 2 project. That's an additional \$2.45 a month, Mr. Speaker, on average for every family. When you put that in conjunction with our three-point plan, Mr. Speaker, in terms of making sure that there's an 8% reduction for all families across the province. If you actually take that in consideration with the 20% reduction that rural and northern families are going to see, Mr. Speaker, and the I.C.I. Program with businesses and then if you put that on top of reducing the debt retirement charge, Mr. Speaker, and the six programs that we have, we are doing the single largest reduction on electricity bills for families in this province's history, Mr. Speaker. On the other side, Mr. Speaker, all they did was leave our system in shambles. We had to rebuild it and we've got a safe, clean and reliable system and we're taking it to the next level to make it as affordable as can be for everyone.

N.B.: Transcripts are captured by a closed captioning system and may contain errors.