

Hansard: Forster to Thibeault -- Seniors and Hydro Rates

From: Energy In The News (ENERGY) <energynews@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations" <energy-comm-issues_and_mediarelations@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Anderson, Alexandria (OPG)" <alexandria.anderson@opg.com>, "Armstrong, Hillary (ENERGY)" <hillary.armstrong@ontario.ca>, "Barbaro, Rachel (ENERGY)" <rachel.barbaro@ontario.ca>, "Berg, Denna (ENERGY)" <denna.berg@ontario.ca>, "Bergen, Tom (OPG)" <tom.bergen@opg.com>, "Bernard, Mary (IESO)" <mary.bernard@ieso.ca>, "Berry, James (ENERGY)" <james.berry5@ontario.ca>, "Biggs, Megan (ENERGY)" <megan.biggs@ontario.ca>, "Bozzo, John (OEB)" <john.bozzo@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Buccilli, Lina (OEB)" <lina.buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Butters, Tim (IESO)" <tim.butters@ieso.ca>, "Campbell, Alexandra (IESO)" <alexandra.campbell@ieso.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Cannella, John (IESO)" <john.cannella@ieso.ca>, "Carson, Cheryl (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <cheryl.carson@ontario.ca>, "Cayley, Daniel (ENERGY)" <daniel.cayley@ontario.ca>, "Chatterjee, Jeet (ENERGY)" <jeet.chatterjee@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Cooper, Sarah (ENERGY)" <sarah.cooper@ontario.ca>, "Crawford, Paul (OEB)" <paul.crawford@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Dade, Christine (ENERGY)" <christine.dade@ontario.ca>, David Barrett <david.barrett@ieso.ca>, "Dow, Andrew (IESO)" <andrew.dow@ieso.ca>, "Dykxhoorn, Sandra (OPG)" <sandra.dykxhoorn@opg.com>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Evans, Karen (ENERGY)" <karen.evans@ontario.ca>, "Farmer, Chuck (IESO)" <chuck.farmer@ieso.ca>, "Feather, Adam (ENERGY)" <adam.feather@ontario.ca>, "Gibbs, Diana (ENERGY)" <diana.gibbs@ontario.ca>, "Gruetzner, Ted (OPG)" <ted.gruetzner@opg.com>, "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>, "Johnson, Paul (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <paul.johnson3@ontario.ca>, "Kacaba, Jennifer (ENERGY)" <jennifer.kacaba@ontario.ca>, "Kelly, Neal (OPG)" <neal.kelly@opg.com>, "Kinapen, Donna (OEB)" <donna.kinapen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Kitchen, Matthew (ENERGY)" <matthew.kitchen@ontario.ca>, "Kovesfalvi, Sylvia (OEB)" <sylvia.kovesfalvi@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Landmann, Peter (ENERGY)" <peter.landmann@ontario.ca>, Lars Hansen <lars.hansen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Latto-Hall, Arla (ENERGY)" <arla.latto-hall@ontario.ca>, "Lazakis, Chloe (ENERGY)" <chloe.lazakis@ontario.ca>, "Leckey, Jane (IESO)" <jane.leckey@ieso.ca>, "Leung, Thomas (MOF)" <thomas.leung@ontario.ca>, "Lindsay, Ken (ENERGY)" <ken.lindsay@ontario.ca>, "Linnington, Brenda (MOI)" <brenda.linnington@ontario.ca>, "Mackie, Richard (OPG)" <richard.mackie@opg.com>, "Maguire, Lauren (ENERGY)" <lauren.maguire@ontario.ca>, "McGrath, Jessica (ENERGY)" <jessica.mcgrath@ontario.ca>, "Montgomery, Kaitlin (MOF)" <kaitlin.montgomery@ontario.ca>, "Naveed, Fatima (ENERGY)" <som.fatima.naveed@ontario.ca>, "Nekolaichuk, Colin (ENERGY)" <colin.nekolaichuk@ontario.ca>, "Nelms, Scott (MOF)" <scott.nelms@ontario.ca>, "O'Donnell, Cheryl (ENERGY)" <som.cheryl.o'donnell@ontario.ca>, "O'Riordan, Eamon (ENERGY)" <eamon.o'riordan@ontario.ca>, "Pagel, Alexa (ENERGY)" <alexa.pagel@ontario.ca>, "Pelkey, Bryan (ENERGY)" <bryan.pelkey@ontario.ca>, "Penic, Jordan (IESO)" <jordan.penic@ieso.ca>, "Pitkeathly, Doreen (ENERGY)" <doreen.pitkeathly@ontario.ca>, "Poirier, Linda (ENERGY)"

<linda.poirier@ontario.ca>, "Rehob, James (ENERGY)" <james.rehob@ontario.ca>, "Reid, Michael (ENERGY)" <michael.reid@ontario.ca>, "Rowe, Jennifer (OPG)" <jennifer.rowe@opg.com>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, "Sermat-Harding, Kaili (ENERGY)" <kaili.sermat-harding@ontario.ca>, "Shear, Dan (ENERGY)" <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>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Erin (ENERGY)" <erin.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Rachel (ENERGY)" <rachel.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Todd, Brian (MOI)" <brian.todd@ontario.ca>, "Tretiakov, Ilia (ENERGY)" <ilia.tretiakov@ontario.ca>, "Visheau, Vanessa (ENERGY)" <vanessa.visheau@ontario.ca>, "Waddell, Colleen (MOF)" <colleen.waddell@ontario.ca>, "Wall, Vanda (OEB)" <vanda.wall@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)" <matt.whittington@ontario.ca>, "Wright, Lindsay (ENERGY)" <lindsay.wright@ontario.ca>, "Yadav, Saurabh (ENERGY)" <saurabh.yadav@ontario.ca>, "Young, Terry (IESO)" <terry.young@ieso.ca>, "Schlaepfer, Martin (ENERGY)" <martin.schlaepfer@ontario.ca>

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the **Premier**. Jack o'neill is a friend, a longtime community senior activist and president of friend over 55 seniors centre in port colborne. It is the oldest in -- independent nonprofit seniors recreation centre in the niagara region and the services are dependent on membership fees and donations. Last year the centre's hydro bill was just over \$150 for the month of April. This year their hydro bill, I have it here, is almost \$600. If this government doesn't put a stop to the sell-off of Hydro One, it's going to be impossible for Jack to afford to pay these bills while still keeping his centre open. What is the **Premier** going to do today for Jack and for seniors in my community who risk losing programming and svices because of skyrocketing hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I not Minister of seniors will want to answer in the supplementary as well. But when it comes to hydro bills, Mr. Speaker, cost for electricity, all of those bills in this province will be going down by summer on average 25%, Mr. Speaker. And I know the Honourable member mentioned Hydro One. Hydro One customers with designations of r1 and r2, Mr. Speaker, will see a 40 to 50% reduction on their bills as well. So, Mr. Speaker, we are addressing many of the concerns that people have when it comes to hydro bills. When it comes to seniors, Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that the Ontario electricity support program is being enhanced by an additional 50%. So on top of the 25% and the 40 to 50%. When you add in another \$540 a year, Mr. Speaker, rates for seniors in this province are coming down significantly and long lasting, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Forster: Speaker, we've seen the commercials but we haven't seen the legislation. So we heard yesterday that the **Premier's** going to sell off more shares of Hydro One. This comes days after the **Premier** actually defended Hydro One's executive pay increases of 500%. Meanwhile seniors in my community could lose programming and services, and Jack and the seniors at the seniors centre are seeing these skyrocketing hydro bills that are going through the roof. Speaker, will the government put a stop today for further sell-off of Hydro One and put vulnerable seniors ahead of shareholders?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to vulnerable seniors, we've acted with a fair hydro plan where they're going to see a 25% reduction on their bills. There's also the Ontario electricity support program where they're going to see a 50% increase to that rebate so they can see another \$540 off their bills. So when it comes to vulnerable seniors, when it comes to vulnerable people in this province, it makes you wonder why that they would put them on the last page of their plan, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that we are acting. We are acting as quickly as we can to bring forward a comprehensive piece of legislation that will ensure 25% reduction by summer. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that the O.E.B. And -- in anticipation of our plan, have brought forward an additional 9%. Bringing the reduction right now to 17%. Whether it comes to the sale of Hydro One, we will make sure we invest that money in infrastructure across this province.

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