

Hansard: Horwath to Premier -- Hydro 25% Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the **Premier**. The **Premier** and the Liberals have had 14 years to fix the mess that her party has helped create in our hydro system but it is only the last few weeks that she's admitted that there is a problem, Speaker, and only last week she admitted she could actually do something about it. Up until she began to fear for her political life, she told Ontarians there either was no problem or, if there was, there was nothing she could do about it. The **Premier** told this House and I quote -- our rates are competitive with New York, with Michigan, with Pennsylvania. Those energy prices are competitive, Mr. Speaker. I asked the **Premier**, what's behind the sudden conversion?

>> **Premier** Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all it's not an accurate portrayal of the situation. The fact is that, for some time, a number of years, Mr. Speaker, we've been working to take costs out of the system. We renegotiated the Samsung deal, Mr. Speaker. We made a decision about not building new nuclear. We were very aware, Mr. Speaker, that we needed to find ways to get costs out of the electricity system. We made a decision around the 8% reduction on electricity bills, the provincial portion of the H.S.T. Last year, Mr. Speaker. It's in effect now. And we -- And I knew that it was not enough. That's why we brought forward an average 25% reduction, Mr. Speaker, that people will see on their buys this summer.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, hydro rates have been a crisis for families and businesses in Ontario for as long as the **Premier** has been saying there was no crisis. And it's not just the **Premier** that denied the problem, Speaker. On September 15, 2016, the Minister said, quote -- energy costs are in the middle of the path when compared to other Canadian provinces. The government has used virtually all available public policy levers at our disposal to mitigate rate pressures for customers. When will the **Premier** admit how out of touch she is with Ontarians and apologize for denying over and over again that the crisis that we're facing is real?

>> **Premier** Wynne: Speaker, it seems to me that a policy, a plan that has been brought forward, that is actually going to reduce people's electricity bills in a number of ways. First of all an across-the-board average 25% cut for residents who pay bills, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see on average

a 25% cut. People who pay exorbitant distribution rates, Mr. Speaker, in rural and remote communities, they're going to see another 10 or 15% reduction, Mr. Speaker. People who are living on low incomes, they're going to see an enhanced benefit so they will see further cuts. Mr. Speaker, that's a practical plan that I think demonstrates that we have understood. We've listened. We've understood. We've brought forward a practical plan. As opposed to, Mr. Speaker, a plan that does not respond because it would not work, which is what the NDP Has brought forward. We brought forward a plan that actually is practical and it's going to reduce people's electricity bills.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker she may forget this but the other part of the **Premier's** story was that the Liberal government had no control over hydro prices, that it was all in the hands of the Ontario energy board. On September 29 2016, the Minister of energy said, quote -- the O.E.B. Is a quasi-judicial organization that's not part of the government. They set the rates. Clearly the **Premier** does think she has control over rates, because just last week she finally decided that the political cost to her and her party of ignoring this crisis that she has created for Ontario families was just too much and she came up with a band-aid fix. What happened -- what changed, Speaker ?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, for many months, many months, Mr. Speaker, we have been working on finding a solution to help people with their electricity bills. Whether the leader of the third party accepts that or not, Mr. Speaker, it's entirely beside the point. The point is that there are people in this province who are paying too much for their electricity, Mr. Speaker. They can't afford to look after themselves, their families. There are people in this province who are paying too high distribution costs, Mr. Speaker, and there are people living on low income who are not getting enough support. We are tackling all of those challenges, Mr. Speaker. The relief will be in place in the summer. It will stay in place, Mr. Speaker, and you know, Mr. Speaker, the reality is. That I am most interested in those people in their concerns and their families, Mr. Speaker.

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