

Hansard: Horwath to Premier -- Hydro Advertising

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker my question is for the **Premier**. Yesterday the **Premier** defended the hydro ad campaign by saying "It's important for the government to inform the public of government programmes and help them to budget. How much money did the Liberal government spend in the last decade or so, people -- or Speaker, to help people budget for the 300% increase in hydro rates?"

>> **Premier Wynne**: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that it is important for people in this province to know Abo the programmes that are in place, and on electricity pricing, Mr. Speaker, for example the oefc programme that is in place to support low income Ontarians, on top of the 25% reduction they've seen over the summer, Mr. Speaker, it's important that people know about those programmes. I have met, I've met people who are no longer students, Mr. Speaker, but who want to go back to school, and they didn't know, Mr. Speaker be that they were eligible for free cue television. So whether it's advertising about the fair hydro plan or changes to osap, Mr. Speaker, it is important that etch in Ontario knows what's available to them so that they can access programmes that will help them in their lives, Mr. Speaker. That's what advertising is about. Whether it's about tuition or lower electricity prices.

>> Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, we have our desperate attempts by the Liberal government to put out ads that are very similar to campaign ads and they are trying to convince the people of Ontario that they are doing something to reduce their bills when we know that that's not the case. They do not inform Ontarians of any actions or programmes that they can actually sign up for as a result of this particular ad, Speaker. In fact the advertisements about the low income support programmes that the **Premier** references are a separate package of ads, Speaker, and they sure as heck weren't funded at the \$5.5 million price tag that the more partisan ads that the Liberals have put forward are. So why is this **Premier** putting the interests of herself and her Liberal party once again ahead of Ontario families who are struggling just to keep the lights on and put food on the table?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of energy will want to comment on the specifics of the ads except to say, Mr. Speaker, let me just be clear, that those ads point people to a website, Mr. Speaker. They all point people to a website that gives the information and I know the leader of the third party understands that you can't put all the information in one ad, but Mr. Speaker, every one of those ads either gives some explicit information or points people to a website where they can get the information they need, whether it's about a support programme on lower electricity prices or whether it's about how to access free tuition, Mr. Speaker, or in the case of the ohip plus, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that people know that starting in January children from 0 to their 25th birthday will have access to pre free description medication. If they don't know that, Mr. Speaker, they won't know all they need is to go through a pharmacy with their health card and get their prescription filled.

>> Andrea Horwath: Internal documents confirm that the reason the **Premier** wanted this ad campaign was to "Combat negative media coverage of rising electricity bills." That was the purpose of the ads. That was the reason for the particular ad, Speaker. So can the **Premier** tell us how combating negative media coverage for the Liberal party will help Ontario families pay their soaring hydro bills?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that we recognize that electricity rises were going up too fast and too far. We have made billions of dollars of investments in the electricity system, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize that what we were already doing, we had made changes, we had renegotiated the Samsung agreement, Mr. Speaker, taken billions of dollars out of the the system, but still there was more than needed to be done, and so, Mr. Speaker, we made changes, we put new programmes in place like the O.E.S.C. Mr. Speaker, 25% reduction off people's bills, we put programmes in place for businesses, Mr. Speaker, changed the parameters around the I.C.I. Programme, which was originally Mr. Larger businesses and was then redesigned to accommodate smaller businesses, so Mr. Speaker, those pieces of information are available. People need to know what their government's doing, Mr. Speaker, though need to know how they can benefit. That's what the tying is about.

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