

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro Prepay Meters

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question's for the acting **Premier**. The privatized Hydro One recently redesigned people's hydro bills to include a message from the Liberal party about the impact of their \$40 billion borrowing scheme. Clearly the Liberals still have enough sway over Hydro One that they forced the company to include campaign messaging on people's bills. Why doesn't the acting **Premier** use that sway to direct the privatized Hydro One not to install prepay hydro meters that will hurt families struggling to keep up with their skyrocketing electricity bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to rise and to reiterate what Hydro One has said when it comes to the prepaid meters, Mr. Speaker, that none of this, Mr. Speaker, will be forced on to customers. No customer will be forced to take a prepaid meter. It will be their choice, Mr. Speaker, if -- and that's a big if Mr. Speaker -- the Ontario energy board brings forward and allows the application brought forward by Hydro One to actually come forward. So, Mr. Speaker, as Hydro One has said numerous times in the media, as Hydro One has said numerous times out in the community and as I've said in this House many times, Mr. Speaker, this would be, if it passes, Mr. Speaker, an opt-in program for customers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday the society of energy professionals came out against any further privatization of our hydro system. President of the society said this and I quote -- and actually I agree with every word of it -- privatization is a bad deal for ratepayers, a bad deal for taxpayers, and it puts the security of a life-and-death necessity in the hands of a corporation accountable only to its shareholders, end quote. Why won't the Liberal government listen to the experts? Stand up to the people of this province and reverse their decision to sell off Hydro One?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The broadening of ownership of Hydro One has generated \$9 billion through the I.P.O., Mr. Speaker. The government still remains the single largest share holder of Hydro One and rates will continue to be regulated by the Ontario energy board, Mr. Speaker. But let's look what we are able to do with the money that we are able to generate from that, Mr. Speaker. And I know we kept the Minister of transportation quite busy with that, because we started off with \$13.5 billion in the GTA, with the GO regional express looking to quadruple the number of weekly trips to 6,000, keeping the Minister of transportation even busier, \$5.3 billion in the Eglinton Crosstown L.R.T. I know \$1 billion is also going into Ottawa, the great city of Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, to help them with L.R.T. As well. \$43 million in Waterloo regional transit, Mr. Speaker. We are able to find ways to continue to build Ontario up, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, Mr. Travers also said and I'm going to quote him again -- privatizing a natural monopoly is never, ever in the public interest. I couldn't agree more. The private Hydro One has undertaken partisan political advertising on people's bills, applied for multiple rate increases, invested in dirty coal-burning American companies, and is proposing to install prepay metre -- meters. This Liberal government sold off our vital public utility with no mandate, against the wishes of 80% of Ontario families, and now they're turning their backs on the damage that this company is doing to our province. Will the acting **Premier** explain why her government continues to stand by this sell-off when we know that it was the wrong decision for families and businesses?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only wrong decision, Mr. Speaker, was made by that party in the opposition voting against the fair hydro plan that brought forward a 25% reduction for all families and for those Hydro One customers, Mr. Speaker. They've seen reductions anywhere from 30%, 40% all the way up to 50% possibly, Mr. Speaker. Those are the things that we've actually done to help families, Mr. Speaker. And want to talk about helping families? We are building Ontario up. We're creating jobs right across the province, Mr. Speaker, by building infrastructure. I know I talked about some of the programs that have kept the Minister of infrastructure busy, but I know you know we're also tripling the Ontario community infrastructure fund to \$300 million and that's keeping the Minister of infrastructure busy, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that the dollars that we have made, the billions of dollars, have been invested in making sure that we can look at programs. We can look at infrastructure and continue to build Ontario up, something the opposition parties continue to vote against, Mr. Speaker.

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