

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question's for the acting Premier. For over a century Ontario's public hydro system made our province an economic powerhouse that provided good jobs and prosperity for Ontario's families and businesses. But after decades of Conservative and Liberal privatization, Ontarians are now struggling to pay hydro bills that are skyrocketing. People literally have to choose between keeping the lights on and putting food on the table. In Ontario in 2017, this is just unacceptable. Why did this Liberal government pick up and run with the disastrous privatization policies of their Conservative predecessors and cost hydro bills for Ontario families and businesses to soar even further?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and talk about Ontario's fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, which is seeing a 25% reduction, that's happening right across the province in every single House hold. When it comes to Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, r1 and r2 customers will be seeing even further decreases, Mr. Speaker. They're seeing anywhere between 40 and 50% in reductions in their electricity bills. And that's because millimetre on this side of the House we acted. We recognized that too many folks that were living in northern and rural parts of our province were paying proportionally more than others in other parts of the province. So, Mr. Speaker, we worked with Hydro One. We worked with poverty groups. We've worked with rural associations, and we changed the triple rp to actually bring forward a further decrease, Mr. Speaker, to now where they can see their bills dropping. Between 40 and 50% per month inspect, Mr. Speaker. We've actually brought forward that and the first nation delivery tax credit. That is actually changing the lives of many of those people right around the province, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, they acted all right all right. Hydro rates have gone up 300% under this Liberal government. In fact they went up 50% just under this particular Premier. Apparently the Conservatives think this shows good hydro policy because they plan to continue the disastrous Liberal hydro plan if they win next year. When the Liberal -- when the Premier sold off Hydro One, she told Ontarians that it was a good thing, that it would eventually actually mean lower rates for families and businesses. But earlier this year a privatized Hydro One demanded a 20% distribution rate increase on people's hydro bills. Can the acting Premier tell us how increasing hydro bills for Ontario families who are already struggling to keep up is a good thing, Speaker ?

>> Minister Thibeault: The good thing, Mr. Speaker, was our plan to actually reduce Hydro One customers' bills between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker, that that member and that party voted against. When looking at the decision that's before the O.E.B. Right now, Mr. Speaker, we've actually said all along and part of the fair hydro plan is that we're keeping the costs to the rate of inflation, Mr. Speaker. So again making the numbers up, the costs will be held to the rate of inflation. Also, Mr. Speaker, depending on Hydro One's draft rate order it's estimated that the bill impact for 2017 will be an increase of 0.1%, and for 2018, Mr. Speaker, 0.2%. But that the again, Mr. Speaker, also comes on top of the 40 to 50% reduction that we brought forward to the people of Ontario through the fair hydro plan. Changing the rrrp, increasing the oesp, increasing the first nation delivery credit --

>> Andrea Horwath: I don't think anybody believes that a 300% increase and that a 40 to 50% decrease is leaving people better off. Still 250% increase, Speaker. The privatized Hydro One is putting private profit ahead of public interests. Earlier this year Hydro One signed a deal to buy evista. We all remember that, an American energy company, for more than \$6 billion. The O.E.B. Told hide row one that they're spending their money poorly. The O.E.B. Said that profits should go into improving the grid and reducing bills for families and businesses. Instead Hydro One plans to spend \$6 billion on an evista investment, which will do nothing other than line the pockets of private investors. Can the acting Premier tell us how the lining of pockets of private investors and shareholders will keep Ontario families and businesses. From paying skyrocketing hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we've seen bills that Hydro One customers, r1 and r2 customers drop between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. That is actually significantly lower than where they were last year, and we're seeing -- we're getting accolades, Mr. Speaker, from poverty groups, from organizations that have seen the changes by the fair hydro plan that we implemented, Mr. Speaker. Not with any help from the opposition of course, Mr. Speaker, because neither one of them wanted to help low-income individuals. They never even talked about it in their plan, Mr. Speaker. First nations. They have seen their delivery credits disappear. Changing the lives of many of our first nations people that live on reserves, Mr. Speaker, and we're getting thanks from first nation organizations. When it comes to the acquisition of evista, Mr. Speaker, there will absolutely be no rate impact affecting the people of Ontario. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a reduction of between 40 and 50%.

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