

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro-One Privatization

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. While the Liberals are acting like Conservatives when it comes to opening the door to private hospitals, the Conservatives announced this weekend that their platform is going to be acting like the Liberals when it comes to hydro policy. Keep the \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme that will see people's hydro bills skyrocket after the election. This plan is not good for anyone except bankers. Clearly Liberals and Conservatives see eye to eye when it comes to forcing families to pay for their pre-election Liberal schemes. Why won't this Liberal government once and for all admit that hydro should be a public good, controlled by the people of Ontario for the benefit of every single family and every single business in this province and reverse the sell-off of Hydro One?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to rise and once again talk about Hydro One and what it's been doing to actually help its customers, Mr. Speaker, and the work that we have done as a government to ensure that we have reduced rates for Hydro One customers between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. And that's something that these families in northern and rural communities are seeing day in and day out off their bills, Mr. Speaker, and that's because of this government acting. The opposition voted against that, Mr. Speaker. They voted against helping families see a reduction of 40 to 50% on their bills. They voted against, Mr. Speaker, helping first nations individuals living on reserve see their delivery charge removed, Mr. Speaker. They voted against the Ontario electricity support program and the enhancements to help low-income individuals, Mr. Speaker. We've ensured that we've helped families and businesses right across the province, Mr. Speaker. They have clean air to breathe, a better system to work at and now, Mr. Speaker, thanks to

this government a more affordable system.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the privatized Hydro One has already applied for numerous rate increases. They've invested in foreign, coal-burning companies instead of Ontario families. And now they want the ability to force people who are struggling with their bills to install prepaid meters. Sure the company is looking out for its own profits, not Ontario families or Ontario businesses. In fact in Hydro One's proposal to install these prepay meters, they say people who are at high risk for nonpayment are going to be the targets. Clearly the plan is to make money from families who are struggling and use it to line the pockets of already wealthy shareholders. Can the acting Premier explain to Ontarians why the privatized Hydro One's priorities is boosting its profits and not helping families and businesses keep the lights on?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hydro One has come forward with the voluntary winter reconnection program, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that they can help families who were struggling. They then work with those families to make sure they can be reconnected and come up with a payment plan, Mr. Speaker. They're working hard on being a better company for families. When it comes to the prepaid meters, Mr. Speaker, since last week everyone is well aware that this is an opt-in program, if it is even allowed, Mr. Speaker, by the O.E.B.. The Ontario energy board is the entity that is quasi-judicial, will review the program, will review the application and then make a decision based off of its review. The O.E.B., in the past, has turned down rate applications, has turned down other types of applications like these, Mr. Speaker, because they have the best interests of ratepayers at heart. That is their mandate, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to continue to allow the O.E.B. To do what they need to do when it comes to ensuring they protect ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, this government will continue to act to row protect ratepayers.

>> Andrea Horwath: Continues to call this plan voluntary or opt in. Nowhere in the Hydro One proposal to install pre-pay meters can you find the word voluntary. What you will find is this exact quote, Speaker -- with a prepaid meter, electricity is paid up front. Once the prepaid amount is used up, power is cut off until the customer is able to load the meter with more credit, end quote. Right there in black and white. The privatized Hydro One says it plans to use prepay meters to get around the rule in Ontario banning wintertime hydro disconnections. Instead of working with people who are struggling, Hydro One will let their meters simply run out. Can the acting Premier explain again why she thinks the privatized Hydro One is in the best interest of Ontarians?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of assumptions being made by the third party when it comes to two paragraphs and a 2,000-page document, Mr. Speaker. When the company has even -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The company is on the record saying this is not the intention of that two paragraphs, Mr. Speaker. The intention is to give people choice, Mr. Speaker, something that that party has never done when it comes to the electricity sector. Even their pie-in-the-sky plan, Mr. Speaker, doesn't offer choice and even excluded looking at helping low-income individuals, Mr. Speaker, but not us, Mr. Speaker. We made sure we brought forward the oesp program which actually helps low-income individuals. We brought forward a 25% reduction. For all families right across the province. And the Hydro One r1 and r2 reduction, Mr. Speaker, according to the fair hydro plan can see a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker. That is actually helping people.

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