

Hansard: Munro (Barrett) to Thibeault - Hydro Affordability & Agriculture

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is to the Premier. Dawn Chapman and Jim Chapman are the owners of Lakeview vegetables. They're here today in the gallery to join us. They have made many efforts to reduce and conserve power. The nature of this vegetable processing work is both energy intensive and weather dependent. Their bill is set to exceed 1 million dollars. Up 67% since 2013. This hydro usage hasn't differed much but the bill sure has. This year they hired a paid hydro consultant. The consultant says that the best Ontario for them is to actually use more hydro, yes, more hydro, you heard that correctly. By using more hydro, they have a chance to apply to a different class of hydro user. They say doing so might save them 100,000 a year.

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for bringing forward that question because I think it's very important for us to talk about what we did with the bill that passed last week. We're actually lowering the threshold for many businesses that couldn't qualify for the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to tell them they actually need to contact their local utility to see if they do qualify for this. We lowered it from 3 megawatts to 1. That's over 1,000 other businesses across the province that can qualify for the program. I know many greenhouse growers in the southwest of the province are very excited about this because they will now be able to qualify for this. That savings is significant. It's up to a third of their electricity bill that they will be able to qualify for by this change we passed in this House last week, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Barrett: Back to the Premier. We just heard about the pressure on the processing vegetable sector. As the Ontario chamber of commerce reports, 380% increase in hydro bills. When will the Premier stop signing energy contracts we don't need. The Ipr2 has been suspended. The Minister of energy said projects under an earlier program includes all the fit programs will still go forward. With business and residential paying the bill, when will the Premier stop selling surplus energy at a loss? When will the Premier restore basic economies, matching supply and demand and restore rational decision-making to Ontario's electricity?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise. On this side of the House we're very proud of the work the Minister of agriculture is doing with our farmers meeting the goal of the Premier to make sure we have 120 more jobs. We can see the benefits that many of these businesses can get especially in the agriculture sector when they reduce their bills. Many small farms will also benefit from the 8% reduction that we'll see come January 1st. The one thing I do have to comment about and when he talked about rational, on this side of the House we're very proud of making sure that we close all coal fire generation in this province. On that side of the House, the PC party are very pro coal. It's the only way they talk about getting things back to the way they were.

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