

Hansard: Scott to Thibeault -- Hydro Costs & Municipalities

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Date: Tue, 29 Nov 2016 11:30:36 -0500

INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Scott: Mr. Speaker, my question's to the minister of energy. Yesterday the Ontario association of food banks released its annual report on hunger, put ago spotlight on the growing crisis of energy poverty in our province. The report shares stories of low-income individuals, especially in rural areas, who can no longer afford constantly increasing hydro costs. Too many residents in my riding are suffering and their pleas of desperation I hear at every event. My constituency office is flooded with requests for help with their hydro bills, and contrary to what the minister of energy says, we do help them access existing programs, but the food bank report confirms what we've been saying all along, that they're only a drop in the bucket. While the premier has taken responsibility for the energy poverty crisis, her words do nothing to help those in my riding who go out of their way to cut back on electricity use but still see their hydro bills rise. When will the government listen to our food banks. And fix the problem rather than offering band aid solutions?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that some ontarians in particular struggle with their electricity bills. We've been aware of that, Mr. Speaker, since we've -- since I've taken over this ministry, Mr. Speaker, but that's because, Mr. Speaker, we had to build the system back up from the ground that they left decimated, Mr. Speaker. They actually left it decimated, Mr. Speaker. They actually relied on cheap coal, Mr. Speaker. We no longer do that. We've invested in the system. We've made sure, Mr. Speaker, that people have a system that they can rely on. But that came with a cost and the premier recognizes that, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that as a government, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we brought forward the 8% reduction for all families and businesses right across the province, Mr. Speaker, and a 20% reduction as well. We also have six programs in place, Mr. Speaker. To help many of these families but all of this, Mr. Speaker, I know there needs more to be done and that's why we're moving forward with our plan, ... they don't have, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Scott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Well, not only are individual paying the price for government's misguided policies but so are our municipalities. In my riding the city of kawartha Lakes now spend over 5 million a year for hydro. They are frustrated that delivery charges are very expensive compared to urban areas and there seems to be no remedy. In August alone, their bill for 5 street lights was \$86 for electricity use yet the total bill was \$41,000 global adjustment over 15,000, delivery charges over 16,000, regulatory charges, debt retirement charges

and on and on. This is outrageous, and residents will ultimately have to pay for this. So they're going to have to pay twice, first on their hydro bills and again on their tax bill. So my question to the minister. Is when will your government act to help our municipalities deal with the mess that the premier admits she created?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to be able to rise and answer this question because you know, Mr. Speaker, they're talking about the debt retirement charge. That's something that we eliminated, Mr. Speaker, for all families but that's their legacy, Mr. Speaker. They left a debt retirement charge that businesses are still paying to this day, but it's the leadership of this government that's going to eliminate that, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to municipality, Mr. Speaker, our government has worked hard over the last 13 years to improve the provincial and municipal relationship that was abandoned by them. They've downloaded everything onto the municipalities, Mr. Speaker. You can ask of our M.P.P.s who are actually in the municipality sector before, Mr. Speaker. Everything was downloaded on. We are no longer doing that, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing \$4 billion given to our municipalities and that will be done by 2017, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to making sure that our municipalities are saving energy, they're actually doing it --

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