

Hansard: Smith to Thibeault -- Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>>MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of energy. Speaker, it may be a new Minister of energy, but it's the same old lack of transparency and accountability and openness from this Minister. Minister, every single ministry and government agency was able to comply with the order to produce emails to the auditor general in advance of her report. But your ministry was singled out for failure to comply. How come every time, how come every time this Liberal government makes a multibillion-dollar energy decision -- and let's be honest, to save its own political hide -- it ends up in another email scandal?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I not member opposite heard the answer from us yesterday in estimates so I'll repeat that. When it comes to the release of emails, over 13,212 emails to be exact, Mr. Speaker, have been released by the ministry of energy to the auditor general and we're continuing to provide the auditor general with more. When the scope of the ask came from the auditor general, there were 80 custodians that were identified with 40 actual words or phrases that needed to be captured. That produced over 2 million e-mails, Mr. Speaker. All of those emails then had to be worked through, Mr. Speaker. 145,000 of those, 2 million emails, were then identified. We have the ministry of energy going through all of those emails, Mr. Speaker. We continued to keep the auditor general updated. On the progress of this, but, Mr. Speaker, we've ensured that we've complied with that and provided over 13,000 emails to date.

>>MPP Smith: Speaker, with all due respect to the current Minister, we've seen this

movie before here in the legislature. Minister s of energy said no, no, no. We've complied. We've turned over all the documents. And then another couple of weeks would pass. No, no, no. You now have all the documents. Then a few more weeks have passed. No, now you have all the documents. It ended up in a billion-dollar gas plant scandal and we're seeing the same kind of ethical deficit coming from the ministry of energy again. We learned that the government has retained a major bay street lawyer firm. When a retain early of \$500,000, a half a million dollars to help them to decide which emails they were going to turn over, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister not understand that the act that governs the auditor general says that it's supposed to get any and all documents that she asked for? We're seeing a court case downtown right now on this issue. Speaker, why is the government spending thousands of dollars on lawyers to tell them which documents to trun over?

>>Mlister thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll have to explain the process of what we're going through, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite. We've already complied. As the auditor general has said yesterday, we continue to work with our office provider with all of the emails, Mr. Speaker. Over 13,000 emails have already been brought forward to the auditor general's office. We're going to continue to work, Mr. Speaker, and provide her with all of the emails that she asked for. But when you start with 80 custodians, 80 people that actually would be involved with this, Mr. Speaker, and 40 catchphrasees or words, that created 2 million emails, Mr. Speaker. We wanted to make sure she got access to this, Mr. Speaker. We brought that down and recognized that there were 145,000, 145,000 of those -- those emails. We have the ministry of energy. Working through this, Mr. Speaker. 13,000 have been provided right now. We'll continue to work with the auditor general and provide those emails.

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