

Hansard: Tabuns to Thibeault -- Energy Rates

From: Energy In The News (ENERGY) <energynews@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations" <mei-comm-issues_and_mediarelations@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Adi, Sana (ENERGY)" <sana.adi@ontario.ca>, Alexandra Campbell (IESO) <alexandra.campbell@ieso.ca>, "Armstrong, Hillary (ENERGY)" <hillary.armstrong@ontario.ca>, "Berg, Denna (ENERGY)" <denna.berg@ontario.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Carson, Cheryl (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <cheryl.carson@ontario.ca>, "Cayley, Daniel (ENERGY)" <daniel.cayley@ontario.ca>, "Chaput, Kaitlin (ENERGY)" <kaitlin.chaput@ontario.ca>, "Cindric, Christina (ENERGY)" <christina.cindric@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Dade, Christine (ENERGY)" <christine.dade@ontario.ca>, Darren Matsugu (IESO) <darren.matsugu@ieso.ca>, "Diamond, Alyssa (ENERGY)" <alyssa.diamond@ontario.ca>, "Dier, Kirby (ENERGY)" <kirby.dier@ontario.ca>, Donna Kinapen (OEB) <donna.kinapen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Feather, Adam (ENERGY)" <adam.feather@ontario.ca>, "Flannery, Catherine (ENERGY)" <catherine.flannery@ontario.ca>, "Gibbs, Diana (ENERGY)" <diana.gibbs@ontario.ca>, "Hill, Allyson (ENERGY)" <allyson.hill@ontario.ca>, "Ho, Larissa (ENERGY)" <larissa.ho@ontario.ca>, "Hume, Steen (ENERGY)" <steen.hume@ontario.ca>, "Imbrogno, Serge (ENERGY)" <serge.imbrogno@ontario.ca>, "Imlay, Patrick (ENERGY)" <patrick.imlay@ontario.ca>, John Bozzo (OEB) <john.bozzo@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, John Cannella (IESO) <john.cannella@ieso.ca>, "Johnson, Paul (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <paul.johnson3@ontario.ca>, Jordan Penic (IESO) <jordan.penic@ieso.ca>, "Kacaba, Jennifer (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <jennifer.kacaba@ontario.ca>, Karen Evans (OEB) <karen.evans@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Katona, Keley (ENERGY)" <keley.katona@ontario.ca>, "Kitchen, Matthew (ENERGY)" <matthew.kitchen@ontario.ca>, "Landmann, Peter (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <peter.landmann@ontario.ca>, "Latto-Hall, Arla (ENERGY)" <arla.latto-hall@ontario.ca>, "Lazakis, Chloe (ENERGY)" <chloe.lazakis@ontario.ca>, "Leung, Thomas (ENERGY)" <thomas.leung@ontario.ca>, "Lina Buccilli (Lina.Buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca)" <lina.buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Lindsay, Ken (ENERGY)" <ken.lindsay@ontario.ca>, "Linnington, Brenda (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <brenda.linnington@ontario.ca>, "Lyon, Sam (ENERGY)" <sam.lyon@ontario.ca>, "Major, Candace (ENERGY)" <candace.major@ontario.ca>, Mary Bernard (IESO) <mary.bernard@ieso.ca>, "Moulton, Dan (ENERGY)" <dan.moulton@ontario.ca>, "Naveed, Fatima (ENERGY)" <som.fatima.naveed@ontario.ca>, Neal Kelly (OPG) <neal.kelly@opg.com>, "Nelms, Scott (ENERGY)" <scott.nelms@ontario.ca>, "Nutter, George (ENERGY)" <george.nutter@ontario.ca>, "O'Donnell, Cheryl (ENERGY)" <som.cheryl.o'donnell@ontario.ca>, "O'Riordan, Eamon (ENERGY)" <eamon.o'riordan@ontario.ca>, Paul Crawford (OEB) <paul.crawford@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Pelkey, Bryan (ENERGY)" <bryan.pelkey@ontario.ca>, "Pitkeathly, Doreen (ENERGY)" <doreen.pitkeathly@ontario.ca>, "Poirier, Linda (ENERGY)" <linda.poirier@ontario.ca>, "Ramcharran, Shanice (ENERGY)" <som.shanice.ramcharran@ontario.ca>, "Rehob, James (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <james.rehob@ontario.ca>, "Reid, Michael (ENERGY)" <michael.reid@ontario.ca>, Richard Mackie (OPG) <richard.mackie@opg.com>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, sandra.dykxhoorn@opg.com, "Sermat-Harding, Kaili (ENERGY)" <kaili.sermat-harding@ontario.ca>, "Shear, Dan (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <dan.shear@ontario.ca>, "Simmons, Valerie (ENERGY)" <valerie.simmons@ontario.ca>,

"Spence Lair, Marlo (ENERGY)" <marlo.spencelair@ontario.ca>, "Spence, Marcia (ENERGY)" <marcia.spence@ontario.ca>, "Stoiko, Andrea (ENERGY)" <andrea.stoiko@ontario.ca>, "Sweet, Edward (ENERGY)" <edward.sweet@ontario.ca>, "Syed, Usman (ENERGY)" <usman.syed@ontario.ca>, Sylvia Kovesfalvi <sylvia.kovesfalvi@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, Ted Gruetzner (OPG) <ted.gruetzner@opg.com>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Erin (ENERGY)" <erin.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Todd, Brian (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <brian.todd@ontario.ca>, Tom Bergen (OPG) <tom.bergen@opg.com>, Vanda Wall (OEB) <vanda.wall@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Visheau, Vanessa (ENERGY)" <vanessa.visheau@ontario.ca>, "Waddell, Colleen (ENERGY)" <colleen.waddell@ontario.ca>, "Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)" <matt.whittington@ontario.ca>, "Whytock, John (ENERGY)" <john.whytock@ontario.ca>, "Wright, Lindsay (ENERGY)" <lindsay.wright@ontario.ca>, "Xavier, Katrina (ENERGY)" <katrina.xavier@ontario.ca>, "Yadav, Saurabh (ENERGY)" <saurabh.yadav@ontario.ca>

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the **Premier**. Today Ontario's financial accountability officer reported that people living in rural and northern Ontario see more of each pay cheque going to paying their energy bills. Low-income people spend three and a half times more of their income on energy bills than the wealthiest Ontarians. Selling Hydro One is always going to push those rates higher. Opening up local hydro utilities to privatization is always going to push up those rates higher. For a lot of people living in rural and northern Ontario or people living on low incomes, they already feel like they're at a breaking point. Bills go higher, their kids won't be able to afford a better life. Will the **Premier** commit to no more sell-off of the hydro system?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable member for this question. Of course you know I hope he's referring all of the rural customers to the 20% reduction that we've brought forward in our bill. But let's not forget about all the other programs that we have in place, Mr. Speaker. We got rid of the debt retirement charge, Mr. Speaker. That's no longer on the bills for our consumers. Let's make sure that we have six programs. The O.E.S. P. program is one that I would encourage the Honourable member to encourage individuals to contact their local utility. But when it comes to the financial accountability officer, Mr. Speaker, the F.A.O. Report this August confirmed the average family in Ontario spends less on electricity than in every other province except British Columbia. When it comes to total home energy costs, Ontario is –So what's remarkable about these findings is that Ontario has already done the heavy lifting in modernizing? Our infrastructure and transitioning off of coal generation, Mr. Speaker. We continue to find to reduce costs to consumers.

>> MPP Tabuns: Speaker, the other side didn't hear the question. So I'll rephrase it. Over and over people say they want the next generation to be able to build a better life. But for too many people they feel like their bills are making that almost impossible. To quote the F.A.O., House hold home energy spending is a greater burden for lower income House holds. Rural and northern families and low income families feel every increase. Taking the H.S.T. Off hydro is a first step, but it can't be the only step to getting bills under control. Stopping the sell-off has to be the next step. Will the **Premier** commit to ending the sell-off of the hydro system?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to find ways to reduce energy costs for consumers right across the province and today's announcement of suspending and cancelling the Irt2 program, Mr. Speaker, will save families additional 2.45 off their bill, Mr. Speaker. But in terms of broadening ownership of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, we've done that, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can continue to do what Ontario families want, to create growth and to create jobs, Mr. Speaker,

and I was in the great riding of North Bay and Kapuskasing to make announcements of infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, that's going into these communities. And that's thanks, Mr. Speaker, in terms of broadening Hydro One. We will continue to do what's best for families on this side of the House while they just shake their fists, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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