

Hansard: Tabuns to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the acting **Premier**. The Minister of energy told reporters last week that the decision to include the Liberals' \$40 billion borrowing scheme on people's hydro bills was, quote, a wide-open process undertaken by Hydro One for clarity, end quote. Does the **Premier** want to correct the Minister ?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said all along, electricity bills are a customer's main window into the electricity system and so we've always wanted to help consumers and give them the information they need, but we're hearing that it's information overload on the bills, Mr. Speaker, and that people find the bills unclear. One example, Mr. Speaker, is the debt retirement charge line. The debt retirement charge has been eliminated, and we thought it was -- made the most sense to keep it included, Mr. Speaker, with a zero so people understood it had been eliminated. In the end it led to more confusion for ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. So Hydro One has realized this and has been a leader in consumer research on ways to improve the appearance and comprehension of its bills, Mr. Speaker. They enlisted a research firm and engaged with thousands of customers to develop a new bill with a goal of increasing customer satisfaction and comprehension and test results, Mr. Speaker, have been very positive. Through the long-term energy plan. The consultation process, the government heard that customers wanted clearer and easier-to-understand electricity bills and that's what they're going to be getting through this whole process.

>> MPP Tabuns: Amazing. Speaker, again to the acting **Premier**. Who at the Cabinet table decided to horse Hydro One to include Liberal campaign messages in people's hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 25% reduction that everyone is seeing right across the province and the actual 40 to 50% reduction that they're seeing on their bills in northern and rural communities, is the law, Mr. Speaker. This was brought forward through the fair hydro plan that it this government voted in favour of and the opposition voted against, Mr. Speaker. They actually voted against increasing the Ontario electricity support program that helps low-income individuals and seniors, Mr. Speaker. They actually voted against helping first nations by eliminating the delivery credit, Mr. Speaker. So when you're talking about the decisions being made at the Cabinet table and being made in caucus, it's actually helping those most vulnerable in our province with their electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. That is something that this government has done, and that party neglected, Mr. Speaker. Even in their pie-in-the-sky plan they never talked about helping first nations the way we have, and they didn't even include low-income individuals until the last page, Mr. Speaker. We've made sure we've helped those individuals right across the province.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the acting **Premier**. I never occurred before Liberal messaging on bills was going to help customers but that's an amazing admission. The truth is we know the Liberal government did direct energy companies, including Hydro One, to include Liberal campaign messaging on people's hydro bills. Government regulations now include, quote, a requirement that local distribution companies provide a customer-specific dynamic calculation of savings associated with the fair hydro plan from each billing period invoice. Does the purchase think it's right to use government regulation to force Hydro One and other local distribution companies to campaign for her party on people's hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: So thank you again for the question, Mr. Speaker, because it allows me to clear up some of the confusion that he was talking about in that question that makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. What we did with Hydro One is we removed all the regulation, Mr. Speaker. They actually made the decisions to come up with their own bill after consulting, Mr. Speaker, with the research group, doing no cuss groups and trying to find ways to make the bill as clear as possible for ratepayers. Hydro One did that on their own, Mr. Speaker. They made sure that all of their ratepayers had a say in this process through their focus groups, and now they've brought forward what they're hoping is that main window to help ratepayers understand their bills and also understand the electricity system a lot better, Mr. Speaker. They're clarifying some of the language. They're makings sure that on the bills that people have that window. They want to make it as clear as possible, and that's why we have the bill presentation group with E.D. A.s, Mr. Speaker, working on this right across the province.

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