

Hansard: Tabuns to Thibeault -- Rural Hydro Rates

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. As you're well aware, photo ops are not a substitute for action. They are not. They are not. The **Premier's** out of touch with what the people of Ontario need. Gail -- Sorry. To the acting **Premier**. Thank you, Speaker. Gail, a single mom from Muskoka, wrote to the NDP To tell us she's lost her home because her hydro bills were so high. She got behind. She just couldn't catch up. Does the acting **Premier** think that someone like Gail should be punished for not being able to afford the soaring hydro bills that have come with 14 years of Liberal rule?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again pleased to rise and talk about our fair hydro plan, because it is concerning when we do hear about individuals in this province, Mr. Speaker, that did have a hard time and are having a hard time paying their electricity bill, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we acted, Mr. Speaker, like we did with the fair hydro plan. We did bring forward, you know, the 8% reduction and the changes to the R.R.R.P. Back in the fall economic statement and we recognized, Mr. Speaker, that, while that did help many, that there were others that actually needed more support and that's what the fair hydro plan will do, Mr. Speaker. It's going to provide 25% reduction on average to families right across the province. If individuals are Hydro One r1 or r2 customers, Mr. Speaker, they can see a 40 to 50% reduction. And if they're in any of the low-income brackets, Mr. Speaker, there are many programs in place that will continue to help Thome. And I hope that they actually apply for these.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the acting **Premier**. Gail's home in Muskoka was 1,600 square feet. She and her kids now live with her sister in Halton hills in a bigger home. But Gail's sister's hydro bill, her sister's home, are lower than Gail's were because Gail had to pay rural delivery charges. When will the Liberal government finally bring forward this plan they talk about, talk about, talk about? When will they finally bring it forward to deal with the mess in the hydro system, to deal with unfair rural hydro delivery rates?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Honourable member will listen to my last answer because I said we're actually bringing down distribution costs for six utilities, plus all Hydro One customers in r1 and r2 designations, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see a 40 to 50%

reduction, Mr. Speaker. That's dramatic, Mr. Speaker. That is part of our fair hydro plan. It is something that we're acting on. Unlike their plan, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't even talk about low income individuals until the last page, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that we're acting. We're helping all families in this province with a special emphasis, Mr. Speaker. We are putting special emphasis on helping those families that are in the rural or northern parts of our province, because we recognize that they were paying a higher share of the bill. Especially, Mr. Speaker, when it came to distribution costs. That's why we're seeing reductions of 40 to 50% on their bills. Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, when that bill comes forward, they will vote for it.

>> MPP Tabuns: Well, you can talk about a bill forever but you're not introducing it and we aren't seeing the action. Gail wants to know from the Liberals, how will rural Ontario promote business development and population growth with hydro costs being difficult or impossible to afford? I'd like to know what the **Premier's** plan is, too, since her press releases and the publicly funded radio ads are pretty short on specifics. When will the **Premier** -- when, when, when will her party, the **Premier** deal with the unfair delivery charges that Ontario rural families and businesses are dealing with just because they're outside the city?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The summer, summer, summer, summer is by the time we will actually have that in place, Mr. Speaker. But let's talk about, you know, being short on details, Mr. Speaker, and that's their pamphlet on dealing with electricity, Mr. Speaker. You know they rely on big, big principles and determined -- yet-to-be-determined expert panel that will sit down and actually find some savings, Mr. Speaker. Apparently, you know, they're basing these on calculations that are pie in the sky, Mr. Speaker, with negotiations with the federal government. I know, Mr. Speaker, I asked before how those negotiations are going. They're actually Mr. Speaker -- they have no idea on how to take off one cent from bills, Mr. Speaker. We are making sure we're taking off 25%. When it comes to rural and northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, we're acting with a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker. We take no lessons from that party.

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