

MEDIA EVENT: NDP LEADER ANDREA HORWATH ON ONTARIO'S HYDRO PLAN

March 15, 2017

Time / Location:

10:00 a.m. / Media Studio, Queen's Park

Speakers:

Andrea Horwath

Media Attendance:

Print – 5

TV – 2

Radio – 0

Media Outlets:

Jones – CP; Ferguson – Star; Jeffords – Sun; Zochodne – QP Briefing; Rath - CHCH Television; CTV; Selley – National Post

Statement by Andrea Horwath:

Good morning, everyone. The Premier owes the people of Ontario one heck of an explanation. Tomorrow marks two weeks since Premier Wynne announced that she's planning to sign Ontario onto a \$40 billion borrowing deal. But so far all we've seen is a press release and a bunch of spin. She's traveling the province to hold PR events to promote and spin a so-called plan that's no more than talking points. Will it apply to medium-sized Ontario businesses? Will it help municipalities struggling to pay hydro bills at arenas and community centers? And who's going to pay for all that interest that Premier Wynne is racking up? It could be as much as \$40 billion. Will that \$40 billion debt start reappearing on the hydro bills of hardworking families the day after the next election? Will a hospital that sees virtually no savings still be accepted -- expected rather, to help pick up the \$40 billion tab? Will people still be punished with higher bills for cooking dinner for their kids at dinner time? It looks like the Premier's plan isn't about saving money. It's about saving her job and forcing people to pay the price one way or the other. Everywhere I go in Ontario people are telling me they have no idea if this Liberal approach will help them month to month but they're pretty sure it's going to cost them because they have more questions right now than they do answers. Today I'm challenging Premier Wynne; show the people of Ontario what your \$40 billion borrowing deal really means. We need to see the proposed hydro legislation tabled in this legislature on Monday. People deserve to see it in black and white so they can debate it and so the legislature can debate it too. Don't hide the details. Don't delay. Don't come to the legislature just before it rises this summer with a last minute bill, ultimatums and no time for committees, experts and the people of Ontario to take the time they need to examine the bill. Put this \$40 billion dollar phantom plan on paper and let's have a real debate about what's best for Ontario's future. So far, we're seeing a lot of differences between how the parties are going about this. Wynne's phantom plan is an attempt to help herself and her party while making a lot of bankers happy. The Conservatives have no plan at all. While the New Democrats have a clear plan to lower hydro bills by 30 percent and fix the mess in our hydro system. My plan is ambitious; it's comprehensive and available for everyone to read online. We will end mandatory time-of-use pricing. Wynne won't. We will help all Ontario businesses. Wynne won't. We will not only stop the sell-off of Hydro One, will reverse the sell-off and bring Hydro One back into public ownership. Wynne won't, and I'm pretty sure neither will

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Patrick Brown and the Conservatives. My plan will deliver an extra \$7 billion to Ontario, money that can be used in hospitals and our children's schools. Wynne's plan gives as much as \$40 billion in interest payments to banks. The NDP hydro plan is clear and now, we need an explanation. Premier Wynne has issued a news release. She has delivered talking points. Now it's time to deliver a plan. Ontario's families, businesses and municipalities have a right to know what will happen to their bills and who will pay the price for the \$40 billion which is going to pay interest rather than investing in hospitals, schools, transit and roads. That warrants one heck of an explanation. Kathleen, table your bill on Monday. Show the people your plan. Those are my formal remarks. I'll take any questions you might have.	
Q: Jones: You keep saying forty billion dollars a year – you're unsure, I guess, about the Liberals' estimate of an extra \$25 billion in interest.	(laughs) Let's just say I have a healthy amount of skepticism when it comes to any numbers that the liberals provide. Look this is a party that talked about a 40 million dollar cost to cancel two gas plants – one in Mississauga and one in Oakville – and that bill ended up where? I think 1.1 billion dollars was the last figure that was pegged for the cost of the cancellation of the gas plants. So, yes I would say, yes is the simple answer to that question – I have serious skepticism about the liberal numbers.
Q: Ferguson: Just, just to go back to when you started, Andrea, you were talking about things that are - or entities, I guess, that you think might not be covered by the liberal plan. So what, what - will hospitals not be covered by the Liberal hydro plan? Will –	Well, I mean – this is –
Q: Ferguson: (inaudible) halls or even community centres might be exempt from it – like, what do you think –	Sure -
Q: Ferguson: - what do you think is exempt from it; because we heard conflicting reports about what businesses. You know, other than to households, what businesses and what might not be included?	Well, Rob, that's the crux of the matter. That - well the reason we don't know exactly what will and what won't be covered is because it feels like Kathleen Wynne is sitting at her kitchen table writing this on the back of a napkin yet again. And that is not good enough for the people of Ontario. Look, we need a plan. We need something in writing. We need the bill so that we can answer all these questions – not just for us, but for the people of Ontario – for the municipalities of Ontario; for the hospitals that are trying to struggle through the cuts that the Liberals have already created in the hospital system. You know, this is this is serious business here, and it's absolutely unacceptable that the premier of this province and the Liberal Party of Ontario put forward some phantom plan that changes every day when any serious question is asked about it. And why can't it change every? Because they haven't tabled anything they haven't given us any real information. There is no bill there's no real plan. It needs – that needs to stop. She needs to put that plan forward on Monday so that we can see what the liberals are really doing.
Q: Jones: You said you were unsure how it will help them month to month – But, how – I	Well, I mean, one of the things that we're concerned about, which we don't know what the answer to is, uh, you know

guess, how would a 25 percent cut not people?	people are going to have to pay the \$40 billion dollar cost of this. When does that start hitting the hydro bills? So the liberals are talking about a 25 percent decrease. When do we start paying the - when do we start seeing those interest charges on our bills? Does that happen the day after the next election? Does it happen at the same time as the 25 percent decrease is coming – I mean, who knows. This is the problem. There are so many questions; so many uncertainties. The Liberals have not been upfront and clear in and open and truthful with the people of Ontario. It's time to stop the nonsense and put a bill forward so that we can actually do the kind of analysis that people expect; have the public debate between the vision that New Democrats have put forward and what the the Liberals are apparently planning to put forward. And let's let's get that done and give people the respect they deserve. You know, so that they can do the analysis and determine exactly how this plan's going to impact them.
Q: Zochodne: You think a debate is not gonna happen during the election in 2018? Like, isn't that gonna be the forum, or will people be talking about something totally different by then? Because last week we were talking about school closures as opposed to hydro rates for the first in a while.	Well look I mean I think the electricity system is something that is of deep concern to people. My point is – let's be honest with people. Let let's make sure that the Liberals are honest with people about what their plan entails. And I've seen this story before. I've seen this movie before. The Liberals like to play a lot of political games that help them; that help their party; that help Kathleen Wynne - but that leave, you know, Ontarians out in the cold. So, what I don't want to see is that last minute Bill tabled in the legislature, and then the Liberals play a political game to try to rush it through – and all the while putting, uh, pointing at the opposition saying: Oh, the opposition doesn't want people to have their hydro bills reduced – because the Liberals decided at the last minute to table it in the legislature. You know – it's unfortunate; and I may sound cynical to be frank with you, but I've seen this movie too many times – this is exactly what the Liberals do. They play political games and they they they do whatever they need to do to put themselves and their party at a political advantage instead of being honest and up front with the people of Ontario about what their intentions are. They've been talking about this hydro relief for two weeks now. We haven't seen a scrap of paper that shows exactly what their plan says. In fact, every couple of days there's a new trickle of information that that suddenly comes out. That's not good enough. Put the plan forward let's have it debated. Let's make sure people know what it is that the liberals are planning because that's the very least that the people of Ontario deserve.
Q: Rath: Andrea, is the 2018 campaign on? Shouldn't you be more worried about Patrick than Kathleen?	Look, what's on is the fact that people need relief on their hydro bills. The New Democrats came up with a plan that we think not only provides that immediate relief. In fact, we know it provides that immediate relief but it also changes the system. It deals with the systemic issues that have created the problems that we have right now. Both Conservatives and Liberals have been privatizing our electricity system for

	a couple of decades now. When you look provinces that have not done that, the rates are far less. They're less than half of what we're paying here in Ontario. It's time that we take a look at the massive privatization in our electricity system and start turning that around. Of course, the second shoe is starting to fall with the privatization of Hydro One. Our plan reverses that and brings Hydro One back into public, you know, public oversight and public ownership. That's what the people of Ontario believe should happen. 80 percent of folks didn't want Hydro One to be privatized. This government ignored them. Kathleen Wynn wasn't honest in the campaign about her intention to sell off Hydro One in the last election campaign. I think it's time that we bring it back into public ownership.
Q: Jeffords: We got a poll today in our paper that basically says that a lot of Ontarians, the majority of them, think that this solution is a good one and they're by and large happy with that. Are you saying this is, frankly, still an issue and you've got a really watch where the Liberals are going with it?	Well, look, I mean, I think that the people of Ontario deserve to know what the plan is. I mean, let's face it. It's so far been press releases and talking points. It's been all about, I think it's kind of funny actually that we suddenly have a poll that Kathleen Wynne did that is showing up in the media. If this wasn't about politics, why is Kathleen Wynne polling about how people are feeling about her plan without even knowing what the plan is and that's, you know, that's a big problem. That plan needs to be made public. People need to see it and understand it instead of just being sold a bill of goods that nobody knows the details of.
Q: Zochodne: There was – a Postmedia Mainstreet poll showed also that it seems like people's opinions about the various parties' plans for hydro is pretty evenly split and no one is getting more than like 26 percent approval. How do you break through, like how do you convince people that your plan is the best and why does it seem that people are still giving the Premier some benefit of the doubt on her plan?	Well, again, -- this is the frustration I have to say is that there is only one plan so far. We're the only party that has put out a plan. You can go to the website – go to the internet, go to our website. You can download our plan. You can just read it online. Our plan is there for everyone to see. We were pretty straight up about what our vision is, what our beliefs are, what we think needs to change with our electricity system. We did that over two weeks ago now. So far all we've heard from the Liberals is a bunch of press releases, a bunch of, you know, PR opportunities – they go and do stand-ups in communities around the province, but they haven't provided a plan. So, let's get that plan out there. Let's provide that plan. I'm challenging the Premier. Put that plan on the table on Monday when the legislature resumes. Let's give people a chance to look at the differences. Patrick Brown? Well, I mean, it's kind of worrisome. He has got no plan at all. Nobody knows who Patrick Brown is, what he believes, what his vision is for hydro because he hasn't put a plan forward. So, I think it's kind of interesting too you know, to talk about what people think of the various plans when there is only one plan at this point that's been made public. And that's why I'm urging the Premier, put a plan forward so people can actually look at it and determine what it means for them.
Q: Zochodne: Do you think that Patrick Brown though needs to put out a plan sooner rather than later?	Well look, I mean I think that Patrick Brown needs to be you know, clear about who he is and where he stands on issues. All we know about the guy is that he's a Conservative

	politician that's been elected for 17 years, nine of those with the Harper government. And let's face it, everybody knows what Conservatives do. Conservatives privatize, they cut. That's who they are. That's who Harper was, that's who Harris was. That's what Conservatives do. That's what Hudak's plan was. You know it seems to me that that's not what Ontario needs these days and it seems to me that people have been very clear that that's not what people want to see on the hydro file. They don't want to see more privatization. People in Ontario know that the privatization of Hydro One was the wrong thing to do. That's why our plan is different than what the Liberals and Conservatives dish up. Our plan is respectful of the people of Ontario, listens to what they have to say in terms of the ownership of Hydro One, brings it back into public ownership and takes out the vast amount of privatization that Liberals and Conservatives have embedded into our electricity system. Thanks everyone.
<i>N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes</i>	

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