

TRANSCRIPT – Todd Smith PQPS – May 17, 2017

Media: Chris Reynolds, Smith-Cross, CTV

Todd Smith:

- - In place with a big red arrow pointing down on the envelopes
- And also insert pamphlets advertising the liberal rate reduction scheme
- And the order indicated that they were to continue doing that up until July of 2018
- So there was some concern expressed by all
- That's why we wrote to the auditor general
- Just to find out if this met the smell test
- And I think what the auditor general reported back, was that clearly this was the government pushing the envelope again
- It didn't pass the smell test
- She did call this type of advertising misleading, and not within the spirit of the Act
- However, because the rules around this were changed by the Liberals last year, they're not actually breaking the law
- But I think what we're continuing to see is that the government is using every tool at its disposal to try and get its message out
- And ultimately what's discouraging is that the cost of that plan - advertising their rate reduction- increases electricity rates because it goes right onto electricity bills in these jurisdictions where the advertisement is going out
- So its recovered from the rate base and means electricity bills will go up as a result

Smith-Cross: Sorry if I missed this, do you know how much they cost?

Todd Smith:

- We don't know yet, no
- No we don't know yet
- But clearly its concerning because when you're advertising rate relief yet you're doing it on the backs of electricity customers it's a bit hypocritical

Smith-Cross: do you think that the way that they phrased that the HST rebate, 8 percent - that flyer - was that partisan in nature in your view?

Todd Smith:

- Yeah, I think so
- And I think under the old rules, the auditor general indicated that it wouldn't have been approved by her office
- However, the liberals changed the rules and, uh,
- The thing that is really troubling for most people out there
- The government is saying that they had to do this to inform people that their rates were going down because they deserve to know that the rates were going to be going down so that they could budget for the rate reduction
- Well where was the advertising indicating that electricity prices were going to be going up by 100, 200, and 300 percent over the last 13 years and particularly in the last 5 or 6 years
- There was no advertising indicating that
- So this is self-serving, self-promotion by a desperate premier who's approval ratings are circling the drain

Smith-Cross: Minister Thibeault says they are preparing new inserts for the fair hydro plan. What do you think of that idea?

Todd Smith:

- Well, I'm sure they are
- I mean they're basically running their election campaign on the backs of the tax payers of Ontario
- And electricity rate payers, electricity customers are paying the bill for Kathleen Wynne's Liberal election campaign
- I think it's disgusting what they're doing, and it should be stopped
- But there's just no contrition shown by this government at all
- They're using whatever tools they have at their disposal to campaign on the tax payers back

Smith-Cross: do you think the loop hole – if you can call it a loop hole – in the government advertising act that exempts hydro bill inserts should be closed so that those are covered by the government advertising-

Todd Smith:

- Yeah absolutely
- There is no question about that
- We think that this is crooked and it should be fixed