

Hansard: Brown to Premier (Duguid) -- Business Energy Rates

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> **Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. The **Premier** may not want to admit it but we have a hydro crisis in the province of Ontario and it is very real. You just have to look at the story in the "London free press" this week. The article talks about Gail and Rob Fullerton from heritage village of Pasley in Bruce county. They decide under 2014 to open the local food store. The Fullertons' goal was expensive renovations was to have ultra energy efficiency in every aspect of their building. They invest today have energy efficiency. But because of Liberal energy policies, even with their energy efficiency, their hydro bills are skyrocketing. Mr. Speaker, when will this government open their eyes and realize that businesses cannot remain open. They cannot cope. They cannot afford their hydro bills unless we see some difference, some real commitment for relief for Ontarians.

>> **Premier Wynne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Minister of economic development and growth is going to want to speak to the supports that we have put in place for businesses, including, including the changes that were maintained around electricity prices, Mr. Speaker. The leader of the opposition will know that the announcements that we made in the throne speech were directed, yes, at individuals in their homes but also at businesses, Mr. Speaker. So taking the 8% off electricity prices, Mr. Speaker, and working to include more businesses in the conservation initiative, Mr. Speaker. That was directed at businesses that were smaller than the businesses that could take advantage of that up to 34% reduction previously. But, Mr. Speaker. To the crisis in electricity I would just remind the leader of the opposition in 2003 there was a crisis in electricity in this province and we've worked to fix that, Mr. Speaker.

>> **Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, back to the **Premier**. The crisis is now. Families across Ontario are struggling. The London free press article continued to tell the story of the Fullertons. They spent half a million dollars to make it the most energy efficient building possible. But despite all their efficiencies, less than four years after opening, the business is facing hydro costs that will soon be back to where they were before the renovations. Gail Fullerton the manager said the single biggest obstacle to our success and to guarantee a grocery store remains open in their town, the single biggest obstacle, hydro. And I repeat they can't stay open because of hydro bills. So my question, Mr. Speaker, to the **Premier** is what do you have to say to the Fullerton family that just wants to work hard to keep a business open in a small town in Ontario. But because of hydro bills they're worried they have to shut the doors.

>> **Min. Duguid:** Speaker, we recognize that there are challenges for businesses regard to energy costs and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we've proudly put in place an 8% discount for all small businesses, all businesses across this province and all residents across this province. So if you have a \$4,000 a month energy bill, that's going to save a small business \$4,800 a year. Yet the leader of the opposition continues to denigrate our efforts to bring down those costs for businesses, almost

as though, Mr. Speaker, he's trying to have two positions at the same time. Like he's not got a pattern of doing that, Mr. Speaker. A very long and arduous pattern of doing that. Mr. Speaker, we're going to keep promoting small businesses. We're going to keep our economy growing. We're going to continue to make Ontario the easiest place in the world in which to do business. And the result, Mr. Speaker, will be more jobs and more small businesses going forward.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the **Premier**. And the Liberal front bench wants to argue somehow there's going to be hydro relief. There's not. They bring in a P.S.T. Rebate but bring in the luxury rebate. Families are going to see their bills go up. Next year bills will continue to go up for seniors, for families, for businesses. There is no relief on the horizon. And it's unaffordable. We need some real change, not band-aid solutions. So my question directly to the **Premier** is rather than trying to point fingers and blame other people on the problems you've created for Ontario, my question directly for the **Premier** is what are you going to say to that family, that family that invested their life savings in energy efficient upgrades, renovations to make their business work, and now once again, four years later. They can't afford their bills. It's unacceptable.

>> Min. Duguid: Mr. Speaker, what we'll say to that family and what we'll say to small businesses across this province is that we're going to continue to invest with small businesses, contrary to the position taken by the leader of the opposition. We're going to continue to fund them through helping them grow through our regional economic development fund. We took the capital tax off those businesses, something that the party opposite opposed. We lowered the effective corporate tax rate in previous budgets, budgets that that party did not support, Mr. Speaker, and that gives them a corporate tax rate, Mr. Speaker, that's 13% less than those small businesses that are operating across the border. Mr. Speaker, we brought in place H.S.T., something that party didn't support us on either, something that's saving our small businesses hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, in administration costs. Mr. Speaker, I'll continue to -- Time. Let's talk about regulatory burden. We're making Ontario the easiest place in north America in which to do business.

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