

Hansard: Brown to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. I want to share with you the concerns of the co-owner of first choice supermarket in Markham. They've been open since 1995. They employ 30 staffers. They have over 100 spotlights in their store. They now have dimmer lights and they switch from 60 Watts to 80 Watts and 100 Watts. They also have a large number of refrigerators and water tanks for seafood. In their last year's hydro bills increase went up another 15%. Mr. Speaker, this means that their bills are over \$30,000 a month. They thought they were going to get relief from this government based on the promise this is spring, yet their bills continue to skyrocket. What message do you have for that small business in Markham? When is their relief coming? When can they have hydro bills that they can afford?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the leader OFD the opposition raising the question because our government has brought forward new supports for many small businesses, but we continue to work, Mr. Speaker, to additionally find more programs to help small businesses. When it comes to grocery stores, Mr. Speaker, while I don't know all the details of that particular store, there are other grocery stores, Mr. Speaker, that I've been working with their local utilities to find out which programs they can qualify for through the save on energy program. One grocer in my riding, Mr. Speaker, is able to save 22% by actually utilizing the save on energy program, Mr. Speaker, implementing many of those programs and then seeing those reductions. We also, Mr. Speaker, have seen a modest decrease for all businesses as well by taking some of the social programs that we had in on the rate base before, Mr. Speaker, and we now have that on the tax base because those are social programs. And that's where they should be. And I'll have more to add in the supplementary.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. A lot of businesses expected, after all the hyperbole in the spring, there's going to be relief. All these TV ads saying the 'S going to be relief. It's not just the one restaurant in Markham. I have a letter here from another restaurant. Rule G Toronto's chinatown, they're saying where's their hydro relief? In four years their hydro bill has doubled. This is despite the fact they've actually reduced hours in recent years. They're reducing their consumption and their bill is skyrocketing. The **Premier** promised relief. They did not get it this summer. So my question, Mr. Speaker. When can rule G.C. Food in Scarborough expect the relief that yie promised in the spring?

>> Minister Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, very happy to rise and talk about the fair hydro plan that's a 25% reduction for 500,000 small businesses and farms right across the province, Mr. Speaker. And we know, Mr. Speaker. We recognize, this government recognizes through the fair hydro plan, which is our plan, Mr. Speaker, something that I know the opposition is still trying to search for. But you know on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we've made sure that the save on energy program actually will provide relief Tom of these small businesses. I encourage these small businesses to actually reach out to their local utility to find out which proams they can qualify for. That's why we continue to talk about these programs and encourage them to apply, Mr. Speaker.

Because when I go to community to community to community and we talk about these programs, many of the small businesses that I talk to saying at that they didn't know that these programs exist and when I'm doing that, Mr. Speaker, I'm usually in an opposition riding which just shows the fact, Mr. Speaker. That they're not talking to their constituents about what they can do to reduce their rates. That's something we'll continue to do on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. The two restaurants, the two businesses I just mentioned were in Liberal MPP Ridings. The reality is businesses are struggling with hydroment and let me say the co-owner of first choice supermarket in Markham isn't confused. The owner of Royal G seafood restaurant isn't confused about their bill. They see it skyrocketing. But yesterday -- two days ago actually, the president of the treasury board said people find their hydro bills quite confusing. What people find confusing is this government has allowed hydro bills to skyrocket by 300%. What people find confusing is the Liberals can charge you \$100 for using no power. What people find confusing is the fact that governments shut off thousands and thousands of Ontarians from power last winter. So maybe the **Premier** can answer this. Who really is confused? Is it our hard working small businesses or is it the Liberal Minister ?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no confusion when a 25% reduction is coming on everyone's bill, Mr. Speaker. And 500,000 small businesses and farms right across the province. But let's talk about what's confusing, Mr. Speaker. Is that party in favour of sex Ed education or not, Mr. Speaker ? Because we've seen lots of notes about that. We have no idea. Are they confused about what to do with energy or not what to do with energy, Mr. Speaker ? Because you know what? We're over 200 days now and we're waiting for a plan. An iota, something that they can do to actually help people. Now what, Mr. Speaker ? All they can do is vote against, vote against the plan -- Mr. Speaker, they voted against the plan that even the Ontario chamber of commerce has highlighted, that they have the importance for small business and challenges that they face that, regional Chambers are getting the support from the Ontario chamber. To work with small businesses specifically, Mr. Speaker. They continue to vote against helping the people of Ontario, will continue to work and benefit the people of Ontario.

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