

Hansard: Horwath to Premier (Thibeault) -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: My next question's also for the **Premier**, Speaker. The **Premier** has shown Ontarians where her priorities are. Self-serving, partisan radio ads for actual legislation or a tangible plan sometime later, I guess. Ontario families, businesses and public institutions like hospitals have the right to know what will happen to their hydro bill, Speaker, and who will pay the price for the \$40 billion going to line the pockets of bankers. When will the **Premier** finally table her proposed hydro plan so that people know how -- when, rather, and by how much the bills are going to end up going up?

>> **Premier** Wynne: Minister of energy.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and talk about when we're going to be bringing forward the legislation this spring to reduce everyone's bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker, in time so they can have this relief, Mr. Speaker, before summer. I know there will be time for proper debate and public hearings. And I know, Mr. Speaker, the opposition critics have received a technical briefing on our plan and they've also received comprehensive briefing documents including technical checks, Mr. Speaker, background, demonstrating the reductions that are going to be happening, Mr. Speaker. I know our plan, Mr. Speaker, is going to offer real relief, Mr. Speaker, for all of our families and small businesses and farms right across the province. I know the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, they're putting forward nothing but platitudes, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is going to make sure that we bring forward real relief. For families, for small businesses, for farms right across T province, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to make sure it happens before summer.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, from 2011 to 2015, the hospital in Sault Ste. Marie saw their hydro bill rise by \$2.7 million, an increase of 45% in just four short years, while their hydro consumption during that time frame remained exactly the same. Since the **Premier** refuses to release her plan, will she be running an ad soon to let hospitals like the one in the sioux know they're going to see relief on their hydro bills any time soon?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the third party needs to stop misleading Ontarians about the health care -- I will withdraw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Confusing Ontarians about our health care system, Mr. Speaker. Since coming into office, we've increased hospital funding by 54%, allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country, Mr. Speaker. Now I know both opposition parties are curious -- furiously trying to muddy the record by not necessarily confusing the impact of energy costs, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that hospitals spent 1.6%, on average, of their total operating budgets on electricity. That means well over 95% of hospital budgets go towards the rest, Mr. Speaker, hiring nurses and doctors, keeping wait times low and ensuring access -- patients have access to that high-quality service that they need. Mr. Speaker, hospitals are also eligible for the save on energy program and I'll talk more about that in the supplementary.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's not just families at home, businesses or hospitals that are suffering either. Municipalities are also worried about whether the **Premier's** \$40 billion borrowing deal will actually help them keep community facilities open. When I met with leaders from Echo Bay, Deborah, St. Joseph, and a First Nation not long ago they all told me skyrocketing hydro rates are on the verge of closing their local arenas or community centres. Since this **Premier** refuses to release the details of her \$40 billion borrowing plan, will she run an ad soon to let local municipal leaders know they're going to get some real relief from soaring hydro bills and be able to keep community centres like arenas open?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by saying, since forming government, we've increased municipal support to nearly four times what it was in 2003. So you know, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous Conservative government which downloaded billions of dollars on costs onto the backs of municipalities and residential property taxpayers, we are alleviating the financial burden off of our municipal partners, Mr. Speaker. Residents in every single one of Ontario's 444 municipalities, Mr. Speaker, will benefit from the fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker. Talking about municipalities, I know the mayor in Hamilton was in the news recently talking about our fair hydro plan. He said a 25% reduction is a very positive step for the city's hydro customers. And he credited our government with listening to Ontarians and implementing what he called dramatic reductions. Mr. Speaker, this is the mayor of the leader of the third party's own city, Mr. Speaker. So it begs the question, Mr. Speaker, come when this legislation is brought forward -- Will they support this and will they follow the advice of the mayor of Hamilton and make sure they support us in supporting this 25% reduction --

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