

Hansard: Horwath to Premier (Thibeault) -- Hydro Rates/Hydro One

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker my next question's also for the **Premier**. I don't think the **Premier** realizes just how hard life is getting for people across Ontario. Last week I asked about families and businesses struggling to pay their hydro bills. Instead of listening, instead of trying to understand what this means for people, the Minister said, quote. I don't see the premise of the question. Will the **Premier** start listening to what skyrocketing hydro bills actually mean for people and take an important step forward by getting those bills under control and stopping the sell-off of Hydro One?

>> **Premier Wynne**: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And again I recognize that there are challenges that people are facing with their electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. Exactly why we have been taking action. Taken the debt retirement charge off people's bills, Mr. Speaker. We are taking the provincial portion of the H.S.T., that 8% off everyone's bills across the province. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that's something the leader of the third party was calling for before we did it. Then we did it and now it's not something that she can support. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there's more to be done. I have said that. The Minister of energy is working. We are working very hard to look at the other things that we can do, Mr. Speaker. But the reality is that the leader of the third party conflates issues. The Hydro One issue, the broadening the ownership of Hydro One has to do with building transportation infrastructure in this province, which she also, I would have thought, as a member of the NDP Would be supporting, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, last week I told the story of Sharon a senior from the sioux. After question period I got an e-mail from a senior in northern Ontario who had heard that story. This senior asked me not to use his name. He uses candles because he's worried about the cost of turning on the lights. He told me about the shame he feels because he can't explain to his friends why he can't meet them for coffee because the hydro bill leaves so little money left over. Nobody in Ontario, Speaker, should have to live with that kind of worry or feel shame for something that isn't their fault. Will this **Premier** send a message to every Ontarian who is worried about their hydro bills and stop the sell-off of Hydro One, which is only going to make those bills climb higher?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to respond. We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there are families out there, there are seniors out there, Mr. Speaker, that are having a very difficult time paying their bills and that's why we acted, Mr. Speaker, with the speech from the throne. The speech from the throne brings forward that 8% reduction for all families, for all seniors across the province. There also is the 20% reduction for 330,000 House holds right across the province, Mr. Speaker, that actually live in rural or remote areas like northern Ontario. But we also know, Mr. Speaker, that that doesn't necessarily always cut it and there is room for more help and that's why we have the Ontario electricity support program, Mr. Speaker. That will help seniors up to \$45 if they actually heat their homes, Mr. Speaker, with electricity, they can actually then claim that to get \$75 back, Mr. Speaker. So we've recognized that. We're acting on that. We've brought

forward these programs and **Premier** and I know that more needs to be done and we'll continue to do that.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, glow juicery is a small business in Hamilton that just opened recently. Between May and July the hydro bill was \$1,400. From July to September \$1,200. Jesse Briskol is proud of the company that she started, but she's worried that she might have to close up shop. And this is what she said about the **Premier's** hydro mistake. I quote -- ok. You say it's a mistake. What are you actually going to do about it? Give small businesses a break. Do something. Anything. That's the desperation that small businesses are feeling in Ontario today, Speaker. So will this **Premier** take an important step for Jesse, for her small business and for small businesses across this province and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

>> Min. Thiibealt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to say that this **Premier** has acted along with this government to make sure that it is better for small businesses out there, Mr. Speaker. Again that 8% reduction is applied to every small business and farm right across our province. There's also the save on energy program, Mr. Speaker, that we encourage every MPP to talk to their small businesses about, Mr. Speaker. They can save significant amounts of money. For example, Donna Lee's Irish pub in Barrie took advantage of the business refrigeration initiative through the save on energy program, Mr. Speaker. They received more than \$2,500 in onetime incentives and they're saving \$2,400 annually on energy, Mr. Speaker. Harbour Memorial, Mr. Speaker. The Chesswood arena. There are many, many businesses, Mr. Speaker, that are saving on energy by contacting their local utility and finding ways that they can enjoy these programs. We're there, Mr. Speaker. We're acting and we know we've got more to do. Thank you very much.

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