

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

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question's for the acting Premier. Thanks to the auditor general, we now know that the Premier and her Liberal government are forcing Ontario families to pay \$4 billion just to hide the damage that her hydro borrowing scheme will do in the long run. We know that she was warned about the costs. We know she was given other options and we know she went ahead anyways. Account acting Premier tell us who made the decision to ignore staff warnings and push ahead with a \$4 billion scheme?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, again the premise of the question is erroneous. The estimation by the financial accountability officer made reference to what he felt were estimated numbers based on estimated borrowing, which were remind -- we're reminding everyone that is not actually what has taken place. So, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is erroneous. There is a plan before us which reduces hydro rates, electricity rates for Ontarians across the province by 25%, enabling us to do so in a responsible manner which the opposition has now declined. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Trust the estimations of the F.A.O. And auditor general much more than I would expect to trust the estimations of a government -- As you'll recall, this government estimated a \$40 million cost of the gas plant scandal. And that was \$1.1 billion, Speaker. I'm not going to take their estimation. Definitely not. In addition to the \$4 billion, Speaker, that this Premier spent to hide the real cost of her \$40 billion borrowing scheme, they also forked over another \$2 million to consultants to help design said scheme. Since they won't tell us about the \$4 billion, will the Liberal government at least make these consultants' contracts public so Ontarians know who exactly it is that's advising the Premier and what direction she was given?

>> Minister Sandals: Yes. Thank you very much, Speaker. And first of all I think it's important to understand -- That the numbers that the leader of the third party is throwing around were estimates of something or other, projections that came from the F.A.O.. H. They were not documents that were ever presented to Cabinet on which to base a decision. They were projections that came after the fact. They were not Cabinet decision making documents. The decision that Cabinet did make was an important policy decision to say that things that actually have to do with electricity production belong on the rate base from an accounting and from a real perspective, financial fiscal plan perspective. Things which have social policy impacts -- Belong on the tax base. And that's exactly what the accounting is based on, is that policy decision. To put electricity on the rate base.

>> Andrea Horwath: I've not been gobsmacked in this place for a long time, but for a Minister to get up and talk about estimations of something or other is pretty worrisome. For a governing party to do that is pretty worrisome. We know that the Liberals knew how much it was going to cost to hide the disastrous effect of their borrowing scheme from the public. We know that they knew it was going to cost Ontario families \$4 billion to do, and clearly they just didn't care that they were going to spend \$4 billion to cook up this scheme. We also know that the people of this province paid an additional \$2 million for consultants to tell them how to pull it off. Why is the Liberal government putting themselves and their party ahead of families once again? They're looking after their political interests, the interests of the Liberals, and this Premier, instead of putting the interests of the families of this province who are struggling just to make ends meet and pay their skyrocketing hydro bill shs.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to our policy decision, we actually made a decision that helps every single family in this province, Mr. Speaker, by reducing their electricity bills by 25%. But then we went even further, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward our social programs, the oesp program, the rrrpprogram. Those those folks who live in rural or northern parts. They're going to see up to 50% off their bills. We made sure that we kept electricity generating assets on the electricity side, Mr. Speaker, and those social programs that I talked about, we've pulled those off the rate base to lower the rates even more and we put that on the tax base, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to putting families first, it's this government that does so, Mr. Speaker. It's this government that brought forward the reduction, this government that continues to bring forward plans and policies that will continue to help the families -- help the families -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is this government, not the opposition, that is making a difference in the lives of families in this province each and every day.

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