

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro Advertising

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question's to the acting **Premier**. Recently my office received results of a freedom of information request about how much the Liberal government is spending to advertise their \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme. The number, Speaker, is eye popping. The **Premier** has allocated \$5.5 million from the public purse to sell this boondoggle for bankers to the public. Documents revealed the reason for this campaign was to counter, quote, negative media coverage of rising electricity bills. Does the acting **Premier** care to explain why the government's spending \$5.5 million, 5.5 public million dollars, just to fight negative media coverage for the Liberal party, Speaker ?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always pleased to rise and talk about the fair hydro plan and what this is doing to actually help the people of Ontario. A 25% reduction in all House holds right across the province, Mr. Speaker. It's important that they know that information. But what's also important, Mr. Speaker, is that they know about the programs that are available. The Ontario electricity support program. This is a program that has increased, Mr. Speaker, increased the refund that many families that qualify will get for it. Mr. Speaker, we have prepared and have a budget to help 500,000 families for the oesp and we're nowhere near that number yet, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that every single person that qualifies for this can sign up for this program, Mr. Speaker. We cannot rely on the opposition parties to talk about these programs, so we need to ensure that the government has its responsibility to raise awareness. Of these programs and services that are actually helping Ontarians, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that we're helping first nations individuals. Low-income individuals and seniors.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Liberal government is spending \$5.5 million to the advertise their scheme to the public. The government adds about a plan that the F.A.O. Says will end up costing Ontario families more in the long run. They'll do anything to help people who are struggling now to pay their hydro bills. Yet the government's low-income electricity program, support program that the Minister was just talking about received an ad campaign worth less than half of the \$5 million, 5.5 that they set aside to promote their borrowing scheme. So can the acting **Premier** tell us, Speaker, why the Liberals are more concerned about spending public money to save their own political skin than they are about informing low-income families about how to get relief from soaring hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very pleased with the oesp program, Mr. Speaker, and the people that it's helping but we know that it can help more people, Mr. Speaker, and that's what the fair hide rode plan did, Mr. Speaker. It brought forward solutions to help low-income individuals, unlike their plan, Mr. Speaker, that didn't even mention first nations and waited 'til the last page, Mr. Speaker. I know they forgot to talk about talking about their plan because, Mr. Speaker, it did nothing to help the people. But on top of that, Mr. Speaker, there are more programs that are actually going to help low-income individuals, those who live in northern or rural communities, Mr. Speaker. That's the triple R.P.. We've changed that, Mr. Speaker, from just

being Hydro One r2 customers to include both Hydro One r1 and r2, plus six other local utilities, Mr. Speaker, making sure that their distribution charge is on average like everyone else in the province, Mr. Speaker. They're saving significant dollars. So we'll continue to talk about this plan that's helping every single House hold and 500,000 small businesses and farms in this province, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to say that the if the Liberal government is so committed to helping people choose between keeping the lights on and feeding their families, why didn't they just use that \$5.5 million advertising budget to actually help the people of Ontario deal with the cost of electricity?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If they're concerned about helping so many low-income individuals and helping every family across the province, why didn't they vote for the fair hide rode plan, Mr. Speaker ? That's a 25% reduction that everybody saw in this province on July 1st. But instead, Mr. Speaker, they chose to vote against that. They chose to vote against on-reserve first nations having deliver credit removed. They chose to vote against the oesp program that's helping seniors and low-income individuals, Mr. Speaker. They chose to vote against the R.R.R.P., helping rural and remote people, Mr. Speaker, that help -- that live in those parts of our province. Of course, Mr. Speaker, that's not unusual for that party because they always seem to vote no on everything, to actually help people in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're bringing forward programs like the fair hydro plan, like bill 148 that will continue to invest in the people in this province and make a difference in all of their lives, Mr. Speaker.

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