

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question's for the acting **Premier**. Hydro One applying to increase cost of delivery by 20% at the same time as they give senior executive massive raises, including a -- For the C.E.O. Does the acting **Premier** think this is right, Speaker ?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the Hydro One rate application, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we're going to be holding all of our increases, Mr. Speaker, to the rate of inflation. So when we have our fair hydro plan coming into effect, Mr. Speaker, our government is lowering those bills by 25%, and we will ensure that we achieve this reduction no matter the outcome of this application, Mr. Speaker. In fact Hydro One's rural customers will be seeing even greater reductions from our fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker. They will be expanding the support to those customers facing some of the highest delivery costs in the province, Mr. Speaker, including Hydro One's rural customers. They will be seeing, Mr. Speaker, a reduction between 40 and 50% on their bills, Mr. Speaker. That is significant for those families, Mr. Speaker. So we will achieve this, as we said, no matter the outcome of this application, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Hydro One is applying for a nearly 20% increase while they give their senior executives multimillion-dollar raises. The Liberals promised that privatizing Hydro One would mean lower bills, Speaker. That promise was total nonsense. Hydro bills are sky high and still rising. Hydro One is applying for delivery cost increases of nearly 20%. Will the Liberal government do what is right -- stop the sell-off of Hydro One today and stop reward, execute -- rewarding executives for Jacking up hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again let's talk about what this executive has done with Hydro One over the last year, Mr. Speaker. They've actually saved, Mr. Speaker, \$60 million, Mr. Speaker. And that leads directly back to ratepayers, Mr. Speaker, by lowering bills. They've also given customer choices of billing cycles, helping them to better manage their bills, Mr. Speaker. They've introduced ebilling, working towards mobile billing as well, Mr. Speaker. They ended the practice of security deposits for new customers. And of course, Mr. Speaker, introducing a voluntary ban on winter disconnections, Mr. Speaker. So that is something that they've done as they've become a customer-focused business, Mr. Speaker. And we've also seen through our fair hydro plan and working with Hydro One a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker, that will be seen for all of our rural and northern communities, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Anyone can see that the privatization of Hydro One has been a disaster, Speaker. According to the F.A.O., it's increasing the province's debt. It means bills are much higher and delivery cost increases are going to go up by 20%. All to pay for bigger executive pay cheques and shareholder profits. This is exactly why, Speaker, 80% of the people of Ontario want to keep Hydro One public.

[Applause] Will the government admit this has been a huge mistake and stop the

privatization before it's too late?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The criticism of the NDP's position with Hydro One just doesn't come from us, Mr. Speaker. There's also many others out there like Kim Collagey of the "Globe and Mail" calls the belief that only early sale of utilities in Ontario affects rates as one of the biggest misconceptions about electricity, Mr. Speaker. Martin Rhett Cohen agrees Hydro One could only charge what the O.E.B. deems reasonable. Even an economist at the consumer policy institute, Mr. Speaker, and a frequent government critic calls the idea that privatization increases rates a straw man, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we will continue to do on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is invest in this province. By building infrastructure, by building roads, by building bridges, something that they would not do, Mr. Speaker, because they have no idea how to pay for it, just like their plan -- On electricity, Mr. Speaker. It's pie in the sky. We have a plan that works. We have a system that's working and we're building infrastructure in Ontario.

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