

Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My next question's also for the acting Premier. Last week we learned Hydro One wants to spend millions to install prepaid meters. Prepaid hydro meters so it can actually bypass Ontario's rules against winter hydro disconnections. With the prepay meters Hydro One won't have to disconnect anyone. The power will get cut off automatically if the customer doesn't feed the meter. Why is the acting Premier cracking down on families who are already struggling to keep up with their sky-high hydro bills? Why are they bringing in prepay meters to the pvince of Ontario?

>> MPP Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Hydro One said last week, as I said last week, Mr. Speaker, there is no prepaid meters being brought forward by anybody, Mr. Speaker. There is an opportunity for Hydro One to explore an idea for folks to opt in if they choose but again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP Sees that as something coming forward. There is nothing coming forward with prepaid meters, Mr. Speaker. And of course this is still being reviewed by the O.E.B., Mr. Speaker. That's the quasi-judicial economic regulator for the province that always puts first the interests of the ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. So that still even has to be reviewed by the O.E.B.. So there's two paragraphs in a 2,000-plus page document that is talking about the Hydro One application. And at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, if this was to be approved, it's an opt-in program. It isn't something that everyone will actually have, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, prepaid meters do not belong in Ontario, period. They do not belong in our electricity system. And this government needs to put a stop to it. And I don't care whether it's -- Or whether it's on the front page of their policy platform for the next election. It should not be happening in this province. It hurts families and it will be extremely expensive for folks. According to the auditor general, Hydro One customers already overpay for overpriced botched rollouts of the smart meter program. And now we learned that the privatized Hydro One, which apparently this government doesn't control, even though they said they would, wants its customers to pay yet again for now new prepay meters. Will this acting Premier explain why a privatized Hydro One. Force people to install prepay meters so they can once again disconnect families who are struggling to pay their bills in the winter months?

>> Minister Thibeault: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a law now that this House passed that actually

bans winter disconnections. So again making it up as she goes along, Mr. Speaker. But also let's look at those Hydro One prepaid meters. It's an opt-in program if it's approved by the O.E.B.. Mr. Speaker, it's an opt in. No family will actually get this put on them. It's an opt-in program for people who think this might actually help them. But when it comes to choice, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to choice it's that party that voted against -- it's that party, Mr. Speaker, that voted against reducing hydro rates between 40 and 50%, helping families in northern and rural parts of the province. It's that party, Mr. Speaker, that voted against the increase in the Ontario electricity support program, helping low-income individuals. It's that party that voted against first nations. And their delivery credits that actually have changed the lives of thousands, over 20,000 first nations people on reserve, Mr. Speaker. We'll keep acting to -- People of Ontario.

>> Andrea Horwath: If a poor family allow-income family has a choice between a \$300 reconnection fee and a pay in advance meter, what do you think they're going to do? It's no choice whatsoever, Speaker. No choice whatsoever. This Liberal government sold off its majority ownership of Hydro One, Ontario's oldest and most important public asset without consulting the people of Ontario without a mandate. It was a massive betrayal of Ontario families, and they're only just beginning to pay for it. It's already demanded higher transmission rates and distribution rates and it's just applied again to increase the rates paid by remote first nations. And it wants to force families and businesses to pay to install prepay meters to get around the ban on winter connections. How can the Conservative model -- how can they model their hydro policies after Conservative -- In fact how can Conservatives still in their policies model their new election platform on what the Liberals are doing -- So badly?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're happy to see the Conservatives recognize finally that the 25% reduction is the best way that you can help people in this province lower electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. Also Hydro One customers and six other jurisdictions, six other L.D.C.S are seeing their rates lowered by 40 to 50%, Mr. Speaker. It's this government that invested in making sure that we spent \$70 billion rebuilding a system. It's this government that made sure that we eliminated coal from our electricity supply, Mr. Speaker. When you do that, Mr. Speaker, when you eliminate coal, we've reduced in Ontario, in Ontario 23% air pollution deaths, Mr. Speaker, have been reduced in southern Ontario. 41%, Mr. Speaker, hospitalizations. And that's thanks to the investment of this government. No less, Mr. Speaker, both opposition parties voted against that.

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