

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 I was in Sault Ste. Marie where I met Steve and Lucy Fronzy. Steve and Lucy are business owners, Speaker. They have a number of country style doughnuts and m&m meat shops. At each store their monthly hydro bills are now costing \$2,000. They spend over \$10,000 a month just on their hydro bills. They've done everything that they can do to reduce costs. They've changed all the lighting. They extra work on their freezers to make them more energy efficient, but nothing is bringing their bills down. How can the **Premier** implement a hydro plan that will end up costing this hard working family even more in a couple years' time?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said, the fair hydro plan applies to small businesses. Many of these small businesses that the leader of the third party has mentioned will qualify for the fair hydro plan and that 25% reduction. So these businesses and these family-run businesses will see that 25% reduction if passed, Mr. Speaker, and that is making sure that we are helping these small businesses keep more money in their pockets so they can continue to expand and grow just like we've been seeing other businesses like outspoken do that in Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to find ways to help our small businesses in this province, and when it comes to electricity concerns, we've even addressed toast that don't qualify for the 25% reduction. We changed the I.C.I. Program once again, Mr. Speaker. This will actually reduce the rates of qualification to ensure that thousands more businesses will qualify again, Mr. Speaker, saving businesses in this province thousands of dollars on their electricity bills.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the congys employ over 50 people in the Sault. They pride themselves on being able to offer good jobs to Sault residences. But with their exorbitant hydro bills they're worried they have to cut back on staff. Why is this **Premier**, why is this Liberal government forcing good community-minded employers like Steve and Lucy to choose between providing jobs in Sault Ste. Marie and paying hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again as I said, these type of businesses will qualify for the 25% reduction, Mr. Speaker, so that's good news for the 500,000 small businesses that actually qualify for this program. We're also working with the Ontario chamber of commerce to make sure that we can get all of the programs that are out to help many of these businesses lower their consumption. When they lower their consumption, Mr. Speaker, they also lower their bills. The I.C.I. Program that I know many of the businesses in the Sault are actually seeing, Mr. Speaker, this will actually help them lower their bills by up to a third. For those that weren't qualifying before, Mr. Speaker, for this program, we lowered the threshold from 1 megawatt to 500 kilowatts or .5 megawatts, Mr. Speaker. That opens up this program for thousands of businesses right across the province. We're going to continue to work with the chamber of commerce. We're going to continue to work with small businesses to make sure that they can continue to grow and make Ontario prosper.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Steve and Lucy are not alone. All over Ontario, businesses that were promised relief are now reeling from the truth that the Liberal hydro plan is a borrowing scheme that is designed to make Liberal friends rich at the expense of hard working Ontario families. Why is this **Premier** punishing, punishing Ontario families and businesses with this wrong-headed hydro scheme?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only two parties that are punishing Ontarians are the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker, by voting against this bill. How can they say, Mr. Speaker, that a 25% reduction today is punishing? It is actually helping families, small businesses and farms right across our province. Not only this year, Mr. Speaker, not only next year and not only the following year but the year after that, Mr. Speaker. And then the 2017 long-term energy plan will kick in and you know what, Mr. Speaker ? We're going to continue to take costs out of the system that will see rates even drop more, Mr. Speaker. We found ways to make sure that we can help Ontario families. We're going to continue to do that. They can talk about magic weekends in November and coming up with policies or ideas that's pie in the sky, Mr. Speaker, that don't do anything and don't even take a single cent. Neither party has talked about how they can take a single cent off any bill. We're taking 25%, Mr. Speaker, and we're proud of that.

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