

Excerpt from Question Period

From: "Kwamena, Boafoa (CAB)" <boafoa.kwamena@ontario.ca>
To: "Orsini, Steve (CAB)" <steve.orsini@ontario.ca>
Cc: "Bromm, William (CAB)" <william.bromm2@ontario.ca>
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MPP Brown to Premier Wynne (Sandals) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Let me share a message complex accounting and financing structure for the rate reduction in order to avoid showing a deficit or increase to net debt. We understand that it creates -- It's going to cost us \$4 billion. What the government has not answered is who is going to pay that \$4 billion? They like to be a little too cute about that. I want the Premier to stand up here today and tell Ontarians exactly who is going to pay that additional \$4 billion due to her schemes?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House and I have said in the public, Mr. Speaker, outside of this House, there were massive investments in an electricity system that had been degraded. When we came into the office in 2003, there was a system in this province that had been neglected. There were Brown-outs and blackouts and thousands of lines -- thousands of kilometres of line that needed to be rebuilt. We made those investments, and there was a cost associated with that. Mr. Speaker, what we know is that that cost has been born by people in the province today, Mr. Speaker, and they were saying to us, and they were saying to all of us in the legislature that their electricity prices were going up too quickly and too high, Mr. Speaker. We addressed that. People are seeing a reduction.

>> Patrick Brown: The Speaker: Again to the Premier, that's a pretty clever spin for how you made the decision, a calculated decision to blow \$4 billion. A billion here, a billion there. It's not a laughing matter. People can't afford their hydro bills. So Mr. Speaker, let me share a quote from you. This isn't an accounting disagreement. It's not even particularly advanced civics. Leaders should be held to account for their decisions they make and the government should make it easier for voters to do so by insuring their decisions are clear and understandable. Fact is this the Liberals disagree on this point says a lot on where the party that ran on basic no-nonsense reforms in 2003 has ended up 14 years later. That's a direct quote from T.V.O. My question is when did this happen? When did they stop caring about the people of Ontario?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think any party in this province that cares about the people of Ontario would have a plan to reduce electricity prices as well as a reliable electricity system. Anyone who cares about the people of Ontario wants to make sure that the lights go on when you flick the switches, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have Brownouts and blackouts and the costs of that, Mr. Speaker be born in a reasonable way. We were very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the cost of the upgrades that had to be made to the electricity system. When we brought forward our fair hydro plan that those costs would be born over a longer period of time. I think it's fair when government after government after government neglected the electricity system when it was finally upgraded -- It's been clear, Mr. Speaker, that our plan does this, provides for the reasonable bearing of these costs. Cost of those investments moves over a longer period of time. We've been clear, Mr. Speaker that the fair hydro plan keeps the costs of borrowing because that is the logical thing to do.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker again to the Premier what. I can't get an answer on. we have an auditor-general's report that says you are wasting \$4 billion. because the manner you're doing the scheme. \$4 billion. \$4 billion that Ontario families can't afford. and now in the midst of it -- Mr. Speaker. in the midst of this bombshell that the government's wasting \$4 billion. the auditor-general still hasn't gotten the e-mails she requested. I'm worried this is Peter's project 2.0. Why is it taking so long? Are they furiously deleting e-mails? Why is it taking so long to have the proper disclosure? Weren't they supposed to be the most transparent government? What have they become, Mr. Speaker?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you. And Speaker, I totally disagree with the characterization of the accounting. Let's stop and think about how the electricity sector works and what is normal for the accounting in the electricity sector. When O.P.G. borrows to finance nuclear generators or hydro, whatever, it appears on O.P.G.'s books. When Hydro One borrows to fund new transmission lines or in the area where they're the local distributor, it's on their books. When Toronto hydro -- it's on their books. Well, hydro,

it's on their books. It is the norm in the electricity sector that the borrowing done by that electrical utility goes on that utility. It is further true that O.P.G. And Hydro One already have great accounting and that has been approved by the auditor –

MPP Tabuns to Minister Duguid Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. To the Premier. This morning I moved a motion to force this Liberal government to release e-mails to the public that were examined by the auditor-general in her recent report on hydro. These e-mails showed the Liberal government spent an extra and unnecessary \$4 billion to hide the damage that their \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme will visit on the people of Ontario. Unsurprisingly, Liberals voted against the motions to avoid having to disclose these embarrassing e-mails. Will the Premier release the e-mails to the people of Ontario right now of her own accord?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of questioning that comes up from time to time when a request is made for information, and the government does everything that it has to do and wants to do it comply. That's exactly what is happening now. The e-mails that have been requested are being complied with. In fact as of today, over 30,000 e-mails have been moved forward, and whatever's left are there to come. I think the commitment that the Minister has made as best as they can is to have these e-mails to the auditor-general, I believe, by November 1. Mr. Speaker, it takes time to do this. It's not something we do in our offices. It's something that our public servants do to insure the e-mails requested are indeed the e-mails provided. It takes a little bit of time. That's how these things work. We're happy to comply and work and we will.

>> MPP Tabuns: Again to the Premier. This is a question of e-mails coming to the public, so the public can actually see for themselves what's going on. The people of this province have the right to know who authorized this \$40 billion accounting trick. Premier told Ontarians over and over again this she's the most open and transparent person ever to occupy her office. She talks a good game. But when it comes down to actually doing the things that are open and transparent, the people of this province have been let down every single time. Why won't the Premier take this chance to shoot people of Ontario that she can and in fact keep her promises and release these e-mails now?

>> Minister Duguid: I think I have responded pretty straightforwardly to the member in his first question. Let me say this about the other part of this question, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that there are three of Canada's leading accounting firms completely agree with the approach this government has taken. It's not a unique approach to this government or any government, Mr. Speaker. It's called a rate-regulated accounting approach. It's taken by six out of the eight independent systems operators across North America. It's perfectly normal. If the member is accusing something of being untoward here, I guess he's saying there's something going on in Alberta that's untoward or something in new England or new York state or Michigan that's untoward or something in the mid east and eastern seaboard or maybe Texas. This is a regular accounting process. It's time for the NDP And opposition to understand that this is a very legitimate way to account for these costs.

Boafoa Kwamena
Executive Assistant and Strategic Policy Advisor
Office of the Secretary of the Cabinet
Cabinet Office
416-325-4400
Boafoa.kwamena2@ontario.ca