

Hansard: Horwath to Premier (Thibeault) (Hoskins) -- Hospitals and Hydro Rates

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> **Andrea Horwath:** Thank you so much. Speaker. My question is for the **Premier**. **Hospitals all across Ontario have been facing huge hydro bill increases on top of Liberal budget freezes and cuts.** Last week it was revealed that the two area hospital -- sioux area hospital in Sault Ste. Marie saw nearly a million-dollar increase to its hydro bill in just four short years. Since she won't release her plan, can the **Premier** tell sioux residents who are now facing cuts to frontline health care if her \$40 billion borrowing scheme will help the sioux area hospital?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Minister of energy.

>> **Minister Thibeault:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the member from -- the leader from the third party is talking about the sioux area hospital so let's be clear about what the sioux area hospital had to do after their media announcement. The sioux area hospital said that they have not made decisions directly tied to increases in electricity rates and that increases have not resulted in layoffs, Mr. Speaker. And let's also talk about hospitals. They're also eligible, Mr. Speaker, for a range of programs like the save on energy audit and retrofit initiatives to help lower their bills by becoming more energy efficient. **For example Sudbury health sciences north got more than \$275,000 for health and energy efficiency upgrades and now they're saving over \$500,000 each year in energy costs,** Mr. Speaker. On top of that their fair hydro plan will also help hospitals see a modest reduction between 2 and 4% as well, Mr. Speaker.

>> **Andrea Horwath:** It's not just northern hospital fees are suffering. Right here in Toronto, access to information documents show that the Mount Sinai health system saw a 45% increase in hydro bills between 2010 and 2015. That's nearly \$1.5 million, Speaker, that is not going to support frontline health care. If she reviews -- refuses to release the details of her phantom plan, Speaker, can the Premier at least tell Mount Sinai Health System if she plans to help them out with some relief?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

>> **Minister Hoskins:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we did help Sinai Health Care system out last year by giving them an additional \$7 million -- 2.1% increase in their operating budget, Mr. Speaker. And I think, you know, it bears repeating. I know that my Colleague, the Minister of Energy, quoted from the C.E.O. of the Sioux Hospital. But I think it's really important that we revisit that because the leader of the third party has a tendency, Mr. Speaker, to visit hospitals without having those important conversations first with the board, with the C.E.O., and the hospital, after her visit to Sault Ste. Marie, the hospital was forced to go out publicly on the record and say that, while -- Electricity costs have risen over the past five years, those increases have not resulted in any layoffs at that hospital, Mr. Speaker.

>> **Andrea Horwath:** If the Premier won't tell the Sioux area hospital or the Mount Sinai Health System if they're going to see some relief under the phantom plan, perhaps she could enlighten the University Health Network, which has seen its hydro bills go up by over \$6 million in six years. Or how about Toronto East General Hospital, Speaker, which saw a 67% increase in six years, Speaker. The Premier needs to show Ontarians that she is serious about real relief and not just buying some support for the Liberal party ahead of the next election. Will she release the details of her plan, Speaker?

>> **Minister Hoskins:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to inform the legislature and the public that last year we provided an increase to University Health Network, their operating budget of \$9.5 million, Mr. Speaker, and -- and I need to go back to Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Speaker, because it's a tremendous hospital providing excellent care to the individuals that rely on it. And so the two hospitals, the second part of their public declaration -- and no, we did not ask them to do this. They felt compelled because of the misinformation that has been provided. The Sioux Hospital said that, quote, it has not made decisions directly tied to the increase in electricity rates, and that there are no planned layoffs of front line staff at Sioux Hospital, Mr. Speaker.

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