

# Hansard: Horwath to Thibeault -- Partisan Advertising in Hydro Bills

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## INSTANT HANSARD

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>> **Andrea Horwath:** My next question's also for the Deputy **Premier**. The Minister of Energy and the Deputy **Premier**. Chair of Ontario Liberal election campaign. personally signed a government order forcing hydro utilities to mail out partisan flyers from July 2017 through to July 2018. That's a month after election day. Speaker. That means that partisan Liberal flyers are going to be mailed to homes across Ontario from now through to election day and beyond. So let's agree to call these flyers what they are, desperate Liberal campaign advertising. I don't think that's right, Speaker. New Democrats don't think that's right. Does the Deputy **Premier** think that's right?

>> **Minister Thibeault:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the NDP Didn't think giving people in Ontario a 25% reduction was right. They voted against it, Mr. Speaker. I guess they didn't think giving low-income individuals a break by an enhanced Ontario electricity support program, Mr. Speaker, was right because they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. I guess they didn't think giving first nations a delivery charge credit, Mr. Speaker, was a good thing because they voted against that as well, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on and on. They vote against everything, Mr. Speaker. They vote against things that actually help people in this province. Mr. Speaker, they voted against making sure people that live in rural and northern parts of our province seen a 40 to 50% reduction. That is significant for those customers, Mr. Speaker, that are living in those parts of the province, making sure that they can actually see their bills lowered significantly, because again, Mr. Speaker, some of them don't have a choice between natural gas or electricity so they're using electricity and we're working on that as well with the Minister of infrastructure rolling out a plan to get natural gas to these communities as well, Mr. Speaker .

>> **Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, what isn't right is using public money for partisan purposes. That's what's

not right. You know, Speaker, there isn't a single person in Ontario whose bill will be lowered because they receive Liberal campaign ads in their hydro bill. No business and no family. There is zero public good that comes from this advertising campaign. In fact local distributors are against the politicization of people's bills. Jim Ryan, chair of Niagara-on-the-lake hydro said this recently and I quote -- putting political messaging on the invoice is simply wrong. I agree. It is wrong. The only benefit from mailing out these partisan flyers is the Liberal party. Is the Liberal party paying for these flyers? Or is it the people and businesses of Ontario?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we have an L.D.C. Working group again, Mr. Speaker, with the electricity distributor association part of that group, which represents all local utilities across the province and they're working with us, Mr. Speaker, as part of the long-term energy plan to create a bill redesign, Mr. Speaker, so they understand what needs to be done and how we need to ensure that we make it as clear as possible for people to understand how our electricity system works and how our electricity bills work as well, Mr. Speaker. So we work with the L.D.C.S. We make sure that we work with all stakeholders in this sector, low-income individuals, ch, first nations groups, Mr. Speaker, to bring forward a 25% reduction that they've been seeing on their bills now for almost six months, Mr. Speaker, and that is, Mr. Speaker, thanks to us, thanks to this government, unlike the opposition who voted against it over and over again.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, he's got a working group of the L.D.C.S together so that they can figure out how they're going to put the forced partisan advertising Ontario hydro bills in Ontario. That's what's going on speaker. Ontarians should not be paying for desperate partisan Liberal flyers to be printed and then mailed to them in their hydro bills. It's bad enough that people have to open their bill and see the costs that come from decades of Conservative and Liberal privatization in our electricity system. They shouldn't have to get Liberal party campaign ads as well. Will this Liberal government do the right thing by the people of this province and stop this practice immediately?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When people open their bills in this province, what they see is a 25% reduction, thanks to this government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When low-income individuals open their bill, they see further reduction on their bills thanks to the enhanced Ontario electricity support program. When first nations open their bill when they live on a reserve, Mr. Speaker, they will see that there's no longer a delivery charge on their bill, and that's thanks to this government working with many first nations right across the province, Mr. Speaker, and hearing and listening to their needs and acting on that, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that Hydro One has come forward with some changes, especially with their distribution charge as well, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see the rrrp decrease their bills between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that the opposition parties voted against. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, because we listen to the people of Ontario and acted on their request, Mr. Speaker.

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