

Hansard: N. Miller to Thibeault -- Northern Hydro Costs

From: "Pichette, Marc (MOF)" <marc.pichette@ontario.ca>
To: "Amara, Bruno (MOF)" <bruno.amara@ontario.ca>, "Bowie, Heather (MOF)" <heather.bowie@ontario.ca>, "Buttivant, James (MOF)" <james.buttivant@ontario.ca>, "Chinchon, Francisco (OFA)" <francisco.chinchon@ofina.on.ca>, "Chiodi, Victoria (MOF)" <victoria.chiodi@ontario.ca>, "Clarke-Darshanand, Jamille (MOF)" <jamille.clarke-darshanand@ontario.ca>, "Elamin, Mohamed (MOF)" <mohamed.elamin@ontario.ca>, "Garcia-Wright, Agatha (MOF)" <agatha.garcia-wright@ontario.ca>, Gavin He <gavin.he@ofina.on.ca>, "Georgakakos, Angie (OFA)" <angie.georgakakos@ofina.on.ca>, "Gobeil, Diana (MOF)" <diana.gobeil@ontario.ca>, "Harten, Jayne (MOF)" <jayne.harten@ontario.ca>, "Inglis, Liane (MOF)" <liane.inglis@ontario.ca>, "Ingram, Kelsey (MOF)" <kelsey.ingram@ontario.ca>, "Jackson, Kelly (MOF)" <kelly.jackson2@ontario.ca>, "Kelly, Maureen E. (MOF)" <maureen.e.kelly@ontario.ca>, "Kerr, Emily (OFA)" <emily.kerr@ofina.on.ca>, "Kim, John (OFA)" <john.kim@ofina.on.ca>, "Kim, Minzi (MOF)" <minzi.kim@ontario.ca>, "Kwan, Ronald (OFA)" <ronald.kwan@ofina.on.ca>, "Lone, Dianne (MOF)" <dianne.lone@ontario.ca>, "Maimona, Mashoka (MOF)" <mashoka.maimona@ontario.ca>, "Maloney, Martha (MOF)" <martha.maloney@ontario.ca>, "Martin, Jessica (MOF)" <jessica.martin@ontario.ca>, "Mayman, Gadi (OFA)" <gadi.mayman@ofina.on.ca>, "McLean, David (MOF)" <david.mclean@ontario.ca>, "Mendes, Elizabeth (MOF)" <elizabeth.mendes@ontario.ca>, "Milana, Natale (MOF)" <natale.milana@ontario.ca>, "Moore, Brynne (MOF)" <brynne.moore@ontario.ca>, "Morier, Rebecca (MOF)" <rebecca.morier@ontario.ca>, "Pearce, Christopher (MOF)" <christopher.pearce@ontario.ca>, "Sinclair, Mike J. (MOF)" <mike.j.sinclair@ontario.ca>, "Spadoni, Peter (MOF)" <peter.spadoni@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Scott (MOF)" <scott.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Tiburcio, Daniel (MOF)" <daniel.tiburcio@ontario.ca>, "Weir, Mike (MOF)" <mike.weir@ontario.ca>, "Young, Gwendolynne (MOF)" <gwendolynne.young@ontario.ca>, "Zhang, Christina (OFA)" <christina.zhang@ofina.on.ca>
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INSTANT HANSARD

>> **MPP N. Miller:** My question is for the Minister of energy. Speaker, we know that the effects of hydro prices on our rural communities are placing a strain on families and businesses. Unfortunately this new reality of living in Ontario is now set in arenas and **Curling Rinks** as they become increasingly expensive to run. Arena staple of the community has seen generations of figure skaters, hockey and ringette players learn on its site. **The hydro bill now comes in at about \$50,000 per year.** Combined with other maintenance costs, the municipality is seriously considering closing the arena. Speaker, will the Minister explain how he expects communities to keep their arenas open in Ontario with Ontario's outrageous electricity costs?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again I'll reiterate many of the things I've been saying today and for the last eight months since I've been Minister, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to find ways to put rates in a position of being lower not only for ratepayers and families, Mr. Speaker, but of course for municipalities and for arenas. Yesterday I know the MPP From Timiskaming- Cochrane talked about his Curling rink. Many of us have these facilities in our ridings and it's very, very important for us, especially as this government as we continue to invest, Mr. Speaker, in infrastructure and building Ontario up, that we continue to find ways to lower rates for those institutions, Mr. Speaker. I used my example yesterday of the Curling club in greater Sudbury, Mr. Speaker, that was able to save thousands of dollars, Mr. Speaker, by actually utilizing the programs that we've put in place, Mr. Speaker, to actually help them, Mr. Speaker. Help them bring their rates down, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Able to lower their rates, Mr. Speaker.

>> **MPP N. Miller**: Again the Minister of energy. Speaker, it's truly hard to believe that we're even having the conversation about how to save recreational facilities in our small communities. Like the Bala arena the Huntsville community club is a community staple. The club recently hosted their annual family day open House to allow young curlers to get introduced to a new sport. It's sad to say however even if they really enjoyed it, the increasing costs to play has brought fears that this will be a barrier to new members. One third of the current membership fee already goes to keeping the lights on. **The fact is Curling clubs don't have many tools to offset rapidly increasing hydro costs. As costs to play rise, organizers fear membership numbers will continue to decline over time. So, Speaker, would the Minister please explain how hydro prices were allowed to get this out of control under his government's watch?**

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know in most parts of the province, the great work that our Minister of tourism and sport is doing to encourage people to play sports and Curling is one of those sports, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing more and more people actually engaging in this sport, Mr. Speaker, and that's a great thing. But when it comes to making sure, Mr. Speaker, that we have this conversation, the one conversation that they overlook, Mr. Speaker, is they actually left our system in shambles. We actually had to build the system back up. \$50 about I don't know we had to spend, Mr. Speaker, to invest in transmission, to invest in generation, Mr. Speaker. Now what do they want to do, Mr. Speaker? They want to rip up all of our renewable contracts. Stop renewable energy in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that is not something that we on this side of the House agree with, Mr. Speaker. That brought in billions of investment. Created tens of thousands of jobs, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to invest in the province and in our recreation facilities.

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