

Hansard: Vernile to Duguid -- Hydro 25% Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> **MPP Vernile:** Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of economic development and growth. Last week the government took a momentous step forward in ensuring that clean reliable energy is affordable for everyone in Ontario. That announcement, the fair hydro plan, is a 25% reduction on average for all House holds in Ontario. No loopholes, no exceptions, just significant relief for this very important House hold cost. I know this announcement will go a long way in helping families from my riding of Kitchener Centre and right across the province of Ontario. Of course homeowners are not the only ones in the province who are paying electricity bills. Business owners have also said that they face challenges with their monthly electricity costs. Speaker, would the Minister please share with this House in what ways the government's fair hydro plan is going to help businesses in the province of Ontario?

>> **Minister Duguid:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ensuring electricity is affordable for business is a very important part of maintaining Ontario's strong economy. Last year, the Ontario chamber of commerce launched a campaign called small business too big to ignore. It highlighted the importance of small business to Ontario's economy and some of the challenges they face. Electricity prices were one of those challenges. I'm pleased to share that the fair hydro plan for Ontario is designed to help on exactly this issue. The 25% reduction applies not only to every House hold in this province but the tens of thousands of small businesses as well. Everyone who pays time of use prices will see this benefit regardless of whether they're a home, a farm or a small business. There is no doubt that 25% is a significant savings. Will go a long way to ensuring that the cost of doing business in this important sector, Mr. Speaker, is still very competitive in Ontario.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for his answer. These reductions in energy bills are getting very positive reaction from Ontarians. All residential electricity customers, farms and small businesses are going to be seeing an average of 25% off their bills. This is the largest electricity price cut in Ontario's history. Low-income customers and those living in rural areas with the highest delivery charges are going to see even further reductions. Now in my riding of Kitchener Centre this past weekend, constituents that I ran into at public events and even at the grocery store came up to me to tell me that they welcome the actions that our government is taking. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister how these initiatives are going to impact the economy here in the province of Ontario.

>> Minister Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has a sensible plan to lower electricity rates for House holds and businesses. All businesses will see a 2 to 4% reduction in their energy costs. Many small businesses will see a 25% reduction. Those medium size manufacturing and food processing companies will now qualify for the industrial conservation initiative and that could save them up to about a third of their energy bill. Important to point out, Mr. Speaker, the reason why we are able to afford to do this is that the Ontario economy is doing very well. We're leading the country in job creation. We're leading the entire G-7 in growth. We've now created 700 net new jobs since the recession. Our unemployment rate is at an 8-year low. This economic growth has enabled us to make these important investments to lower energy bills. Speaker, we now have an energy system in the province that is not only clean and reliable but also affordable.

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