

Hansard: MPP Brown (PC) and MPP Smith (PC) to Thibeault -- Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan

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Date: Thu, 19 Oct 2017 11:13:39 -0400

MPP Brown (PC) to Minister Thibeault (Energy) and possibly missing emails

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. According to the scathing auditor general's report, the Minister -- ministry of energy signed a contract with the retainer of \$500,000 to receive help from a law firm to provide services and to compile emails before providing them to us. At the same time they completed the special report. The ministry has still not provided us with all the emails from the auditor general's office. Those emails were requested on may 31st, 2017. I can appreciate the frustration of the auditor general. Mr. Speaker, **Premier** authorize or instruct the Minister of energy to block or delay the release of those emails, or did the Minister obstruct the auditor general on his own decision?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains committed to being open and transparent and continues to co-operate with the office of the auditor general. For example, Mr. Speaker, the independent electricity system operator has so far provided 1,200 records to the auditor general. Ontario power generation has provided hundreds of records, Mr. Speaker. The Ontario financing authority has provided 3,242 records. Treasury board, thousands every records. And as of yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I explained that, as of October 13th, the ministry has provided 13,212 records to the office of the auditor general. In this process, Mr. Speaker, and throughout our everyday operations, we're adhering to all document retention standards. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the ministry is continuing to release additional information to the auditor general. In fact committed to providing all additional records to the auditor by November 1st. The ministry has been regularly providing the auditor general's office with additional

documents each week and will continue.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the **Premier**. The question was who ordered the obstruction? Was it the **Premier's** office or was it the Minister of energy's own decision? The Minister said that he released 13,000 emails to the auditor general. However he still went out and got some high-priced help for this apparent obstruction. In fact the half a million dollars consulting firm and his office originally identified some 2 million emails. That means he released less than 1%. That's actually .65% of the identified emails. We released 1% of our emails to the auditor general. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. Less than 1%. That's not transparent. That's a government that's engaged in obstruction. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is very straightforward to the **Premier** herself. Will the **Premier** release the other 99% of the emails and –to the auditor general.

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again we had 80 custodians identified capturing 40 phrases, Mr. Speaker, that provided over 2 million emails. None of those -- not all of those emails, Mr. Speaker, applied to this actual document and to this request, Mr. Speaker. But really, when we're looking at what was being done with the fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, it was giving families what they had asked for, real and immediate relief on their electricity bills, and that's what we delivered, Mr. Speaker. We made a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable --Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, we made the policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, we made the policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system. For ratepayers of today and ratepayers of tomorrow.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, for a third time, directly to the **Premier**. The half-a-million-dollar consultants have had since May 31st to get these emails to the auditor general. That's 141 days and counting. I'm sure Peter Faist works his email magic a lot quicker than that and it only costs \$10,000. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the auditor general. This is an offensive obstruction of the rights of the auditor general, and every single member of this legislature. Mr. Speaker -- One more day is one too many. So my question, Mr. Speaker, directly to the **Premier** -- I hope that she will answer this herself rather than passing the buck. Will she have those emails boxed up and sent over to the auditor general before another one of her Liberal cronies has a chance to double delete them? Exposure. Will she release the other 99% of emails on this very serious matter?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Talking about days, we know it's almost 365 days that they've said that they would release a plan on what they would do with the electricity sector, Mr. Speaker, and they have done nothing. Let's look at what we have done, Mr. Speaker. We've lowered electricity bills by 25% for all residential customers and as many as a half a million small businesses and farms, and I know the parties opposite have yet to even present a credible plan. Families in this province asked for real and immediate relief and that's what we've delivered, Mr. Speaker. The fair hydro plan is providing that 25% reduction to all residential ratepayers and guarantees that we're going to keep the costs will not rise beyond the rate of inflation for the next four years. Mr. Speaker, electricity rates had risen too much too fast, and as a result of this investments that we've made in our electricity system, which have become unreliable. With Brownouts and blackouts, the fair hydro plan makes sure, with the investments that we made, that we've made made it clean, reliable and affordable, Mr. Speaker. With Brownouts and blackouts, the fair hydro plan makes sure, with the investments that we made, that we've made made it clean, reliable and affordable, Mr. Speaker .

Second question on similar topic

>>MPP Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier, Speaker. The Premier rode in on a white horse. She touted her open government. She loudly exclaimed that let's do things differently. And then her speech from the throne, quote, the plan to open up government -- With increased transparency and more accountability. And ever since then they -- Speaker, she made all these promises. Ever since then, she's respected the independent officers of the legislature. She's thrown open the books for the independent officers to look at. She's followed the rules and she's respected the law. Kidding. She hasn't done any of that. She's actually made up her own rules. She's made up her own rules. She's actually removed oversight from the officers of the legislature. Mr. Speaker, what happened to this Premier saying she was going to do things differently?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know when my Honourable friend rises and talks about all of the great things that our Premier continues to do, he was starting off on the right path, Mr. Speaker. But the only party that is seen as a party that's kidding with the people of Ontario is the party opposite, Mr. Speaker. That party will do one thing and then say another every single week, Mr. Speaker. They talk about bringing forward a plan on electricity and then say oh, wait. No, that will come next week. No, wait. That will come next month. Now it's going to happen in some magical weekend in November. But we know, Mr. Speaker, they have no plan. They have no idea on what to do to help the people of Ontario. Just for example, Mr. Speaker, not even when it comes to electricity. Let's talk about minimum wage. First in the first reading, Mr. Speaker, they vote in favour of helping all low-income people in this province. Then when it came to voting on the bill yesterday, Mr. Speaker, where were they? Nowhere Mr. Speaker .

>>MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, it's really a shame that the Premier won't actually answer these questions about her lack of openness and transparency that she promised. We're talking about a brand-new \$4 billion scandal here on this so-called fair hydro plan. This is going to cost billions of dollars, taxpayers and electricity customers billions. It's starting to look like an episode of the Simpsons over there. Where are they going to find this \$4 billion? A case of duff's beer or Lisa's saxophone or grandpa Simpson's drawer? Who's running the show over there? Is it Homer Simpson or is it Ed Clark? We have the members of the eastern Ontario warden's caucus who are here. They're looking for much needed infrastructure dollars. How far would this \$4 billion go to answering the needs in our local communities? But it's not going there, Mr. Speaker. When will the Premier just stand up and she cease made an enormous mistake on this scheme? Minister Thibeault:: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I know, Mr. Speaker, that the fair hydro plan is reducing everyone in this province their bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker. That's something that we should all be proud of because we recognize that we spent money in infrastructure rebuilding this system. \$70 billion, Mr. Speaker. But when you want to talk about infrastructure bills, I know that the Minister of infrastructure, even the Minister of transportation can talk over and over again, Mr. Speaker, about all the infrastructure that we're building right across the province. But let me start talking a little bit about the

infrastructure. \$13.5 billion in the gtha go regional express rail. It's going to quadruple the number of weekly trips to 6,000. 5.3 billion Eglinton crosstown L.R.T. \$1 billion in the ring of fire tripling the Ontario community infrastructure fund to \$300 million. \$1.4 billion in the Hurontario L.R.T.. 1 billion in Ottawa's L.R.T. 43 million in the Waterloo regional transit hub and I haven't even started on northern Ontario.

>>MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. It's amazing to me that the Premier doesn't want to answer these questions, because we're talking about a lack of openness and transparency that she promised here, and this scandal is costing us \$4 billion. And they haven't released all of the documents. They haven't released the emails. In all seriousness, the fact that they haven't released all of the emails given what happened during the gas plant scandal, Speaker, is absurd much it's an egregious breach of trust by this government. They stonewalled an F.O.I. Saying no records exist and now they play the waiting game trying to outlast the public's right to see the government's backroom dealings. Speaker, I'll provide the boxes. All they have to do is take those emails, put them in the boxes. As a matter of fact, I still have the boxes from the gas plant scandal. I'll send those boxes over and they can put the emails in those boxes. Just turn over the boxes and do the right thing

>>Minister Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, so let's be clear on one thing, Mr. Speaker. All of the boxes that they have on that side are usually filled with something else, Mr. Speaker, and it's not something that we really want to smell. But the one thing I can talk about here, Mr. Speaker, is that we've made sure -- we've made sure that we've put 80 custodians, 40 access words, Mr. Speaker, and we have come up with 2 million documents. Those 2 million documents were went through by our law firm and they identified 145,000 emails. Those 145,000 emails, Mr. Speaker, are now being gone through by the ministry of energy, making sure that we can provide to the auditor general as many emails as possible. And that has been 13,212 by October 13th. And you know what, Mr. Speaker ? We're going to make sure that she has all of those documents by November 1st.

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