

Summary of Question Period for Tues. May 30/17

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MPP Horwath (NDP) to Minister Sandals re: government advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the acting **Premier**. Last week it became clear just how far the **Premier's** willing to go to try to revive her personal and political fortunes. She's planning to force utility companies to deliver political inserts containing a message aimed at saving the Liberal party. Does the **Premier** believe that by forcing, by regulation, private companies to campaign on her behalf, does she believe, Speaker, that this is aboveboard and honest?

>> Minister Sandals: Well, thank you, Speaker. I do need to start by reminding people that Canada is the only jurisdiction -- or Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada that actually has a law that outlaws partisan advertising. No other province in Canada has that. We are unique. And on anything that we publish, any advertising is compliant with that law. Now if you want to look at getting information -- If you want to look at information that's inserted in hydro bills, one of the experiences I have in my constituency office -- and I'm sure lots of other folks do, too -- is that people don't understand their hydro bills. They call the local distributor. They call Hydro One. They call the constit. office. They're trying to figure out their hydro bills. They want information in their hydro bill.

>> Andrea Horwath: The **Premier** is doing nothing more than looking out for her own best interests with these political inserts and everybody knows it. By forcing companies to carry these ads during election campaigns, during an election campaign, Speaker, she is playing sneaky political games and trying to manipulate the very election laws that we're talking about. Will this **Premier** and the Liberal party admit that mandating politically motivated, politically convenient inserts to be included in people's hydro bills during an election campaign is just too far to go even for the Liberals?

>>Minister Sandals: Another thing we've discovered in my constituency office is a lot of people who would qualify for the OESP, the Ontario electricity support program, don't know about it. Do you know, Speaker, what's in that partisan advertising, which are what she calls -- wants to call partisan advertising? It is information about the Ontario electricity support program. We actually think it's important that people all over Ontario get information about the Ontario electricity support program so that if they qualify, they can get more than 25% off their hydro bill. They can qualify for more money off if they are lower income, and we want people to know that because we want to help the people of Ontario.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the next election is just over a year away. That's the same time frame, coincidentally, that the Premier is mandating these political inserts appear in every House hold and every business in our province. Does the Premier and the Liberal party really think that the people of this province don't see what they're doing?

>>Minister Sandals: I think that what the people of Ontario want to know is when they qualify for help. They want to know that if they're ever in a rural or remote part of Ontario that they can get extra help off their hydro bill, because we recognize that if you live in rural or northern Ontario, you need extra help. And you could qualify for up to 40 to 50% off your hydro bill. We think that people who are Ontario hydro consumers deserve to know that they should apply for the oesp. We don't think that's partisan. We think that's just giving people all over Ontario, the people -- the information that they need to reduce their hydro bills to the maximum. Because we have a fair hydro plan so that we can reduce rates all across this province.

MPP Horwath (NDP) to Minister Matthews re: government advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: This question's for the acting Premier, Speaker. But I think what people want to see is the government stop using precious public dollars to promote the Liberal party and Kathleen Wynne. That's what I think people want to see. Clearly the electricity companies who will be forced to deliver this politically motivated message on behalf of the Premier didn't think it was necessary, Speaker, or else they would have provided the information themselves on their own. Does the Premier know something that every electricity in the province -- somehow doesn't need to know or doesn't know? Is there something that they're aware of that every electricity company isn't aware of, Speaker ?

>>Minister Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I'm glad we're having the chance to talk about hydro prices today and I'm particularly disturbed to hear that yesterday it was announced that the NDP Will not support, in fact will repeal the bill that will bring hydro relief for people across this province. They announced yesterday that they will actually increase hydro prices, that they will take the 25% back, Speaker, that the 40% that many people in rural and northern Ontario, relief that they will get will be rescinded under the NDP They said the Ontario electricity support program that provides energy relief for the most vulnerable in this province will be repealed. Speaker, it's no surprise that the opposition is asking about our insert in an envelope because they are not prepared to talk about their plan. To repeal this whole bill.

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. We replaced it with a plan that actually creates systemic change and bringing --S Hydro One back into public hands and creates savings for the long term for people of Ontario. It's really shocking actually. We announced this almost a month ago and the Minister just realized yesterday that this was the NDP's position? Shame on her. Look, when the Premier forces electricity companies, Speaker, to do something that they deem unnecessary, it's a political tactic, plainly and simple. That tactic is meant to harness the power of the office of the Premier for political gain. There is no way around that fact. And it's time the Premier takes responsibility for this manipulation. Will she revoke the regulation now and apologize to the people of Ontario for misusing the power of her office?

>> Minister Matthews: Speaker, let's be really clear. The MPP Wants to the cancel the

decreases to hydro prices for the people of Ontario. That in my opinion is a shameful position for the third party to be taking. They claim they will replace it with something but they have no idea what they are going to replace it with, Speaker. But what we do know for sure that it will take away relief from the people of this province. And they will also take money from health and from education, because part of their plan is to buy back the shares in Hydro One, Speaker. Let's just be really clear. Anyone who is watching, anyone who is paying attention to this, the NDP Want to increase your hydro bill. They want to take away the support for the most vulnerable people. They want to take away the -- The delivery costs for on reserve first nations, Speaker, and now --

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think you can get your bottom dollar that every person in Ontario is watching the mess the Liberals have made of our electricity system and what it's costing people today and for generations to come. The F.A.O., the financial accountability officer, an independent officer of this legislature, said that the Premier's \$45 billion hydro borrowing scheme will cost Ontarians, will cost Ontario families and businesses more money and that it will actually drive bills up. Now that's not me as a partisan saying that. That's the financial accountability officer. There is no hiding the fact, Speaker. Even though it's conveniently excluded from the Premier's regulation forcing companies to promote her and her political party. The Premier has decided to use her position, her office as Premier, to mandate that the Liberal party's politically motivated description of this scheme is delivered to Ontario doorsteps regularly now and throughout the next election.

>> Minister Matthews: You know, Speaker, for months in this House the third party came with examples of people who were really suffering with high electricity prices. Speaker, we heard those stories in our own ridings, too. We went to work. We rolled up our sleeves and we developed a plan that will provide immediate relief, 25% reduction electricity bills, Speaker, and more than that for people who are paying the highest rates. We have a plan. We've been very transparent about that plan. It's a plan that reduces electricity bills, and to think that the NDP Party will stand in their place day after day after day after day to complain about a problem and then when we develop a solution say no to that, Speaker, without coming up with their own is just not ok. We've got a plan.—it wil--

MPP Brown (PC) to Ministers Naqvi and Minister Duguid about the Fair Hydro Plan.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House leader. I'm going to quote the head of Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Mr. Warren "Smoky" Thomas. He said -- and it's important the government actually listens to this, he said "Bill 132 is terrible, terrible legislation, and I urge you to stop it." Mr. Speaker, will the government do just that? Will they stop their \$93 billion unfair hydro scheme?

>>Minister Naqvi: Well, Speaker, our objective on this side of the House is to cut hydro rates for hard working Ontarians, Speaker. And that is why our government and the leadership of our Premier is focused on cutting the hydro rates by 25%. Now of course, Speaker, from the opposite side, we have heard that they have had no plan whatsoever when it comes to energy. They kept talking about they're going to have a hydro plan. They're going to keep telling Ontarians somehow they will be

able to magically cut hydro rates for Ontarians but we have seen no plan whatsoever. Speaker, what we have done through the fair hydro plan act is put forward a concrete plan by which hydro rates will be cut by 25%. And the only reasonable and sensible thing for the opposition to do. Is to support that plan, to support that legislation so that Ontarians can have the relief they deserve so much.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the government House leader. I know why the Liberals' favourite pastime is attacking the nonpartisan independent watchdogs are seen auditor general. She too has had an interesting comment I'd like to share. She said -- we would recommend the government reconsider this Bill 132. Mr. Speaker, I'll give the government another chance to take the A.G.'s advice. We've got civil service workers saying this is a big problem. You've got the auditor general saying it's a big problem. Ontarians are concerned their buys are going to skyrocket because of this. Will you do the right thing? Take the A.G.'s advice and reconsider this unfair hydro scheme?

>>Minister Duguid: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the leader of the opposition said something that I think was historic in this legislature. He actually made a policy declaration. What he said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, is I will not invest in energy infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we've heard that line before and we saw the impact of not investing in energy infrastructure. My parents and Ernie Eves said exactly the same thing and, Mr. Speaker, they did exactly the same thing. They had no plan to invest in energy infrastructure and they left the energy system in a mess, Mr. Speaker. Not only do we have a clean and reliable energy -- Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a clean reliable energy system. We're moving now to make that system more affordable for everyday Ontarians by reducing costs by 25%. The leader the opposition won't support that either.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the government House leader. The Minister 's right, I will not invest in bad Liberal contracts. It's not right. The people of Ontario are paying too much because of these bad contracts. The Liberals have benefitted too long and it's hurt the people. So let's hear another assessment on this unfair hydro scheme. CUPE's Fred Hahn made interesting comments about Bill 132. He said the following to this government -- I want you to know the people of Ontario will not be fooled. They were members in the long-term what you have done to mess up our look trusty future in the province of Ontario. The unfair hydro scheme will not fool anyone. Hydro rates are going to skyrocket. Every independent assessment says that very clearly. We can't afford our hydro bills. It's not right. Mr. Speaker, one more chance for the government House leader to come clean and say this is going to cause hydro rates to spike and we're going to stop it.

>>Minister Duguid: If the member really believed what he just said, he wouldn't have started out his question period talking about rubber ducks, Mr. Speaker. The fact is you want to talk about ducking, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about ducking questions on sex Ed. Let's talk about ducking questions on the carbon tax. Let's talk about ducking questions on the energy plan that we're still waiting to hear, Mr. Speaker. All he does is duck every time anybody asks him a question on the energy plan. Let's talk about ducking questions about your own caucus members. Let's talk about ducking questions, Mr. Speaker, about just about anything of substantive policy. Mr. Speaker, we're moving forward with a clean reliable energy plan that's going to ensure it's more affordable for everyday Ontarians. We're proud of that plan. No wonder you don't want Ontarians to know

about it, Mr. Speaker. That might be bad policy for you. But it's good for the people of Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.