

Hansard: Yakabuski to Naqvi -- Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan

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INSTANT HANSARD

>>MPP Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the acting Premier. The Liberals' disastrous energy policy has forced many Ontarians to make a choice between heating and eating. Skyrocketing energy bills have put them in a most precarious position. The Liberals' answer was to ban winter disconnections, which amounts no more than a sy execution. When winter's over, Speaker, and we find that thousands are now facing disconnection this is spring. If hundreds of struggling families in Sudbury and thousands across Ontario couldn't afford to pay their hydro bills in the winter, what makes the government think they will be able to pay the bill, plus the arrears, in the spring? What is the acting Premier saying to those families now that the wolf is at the door?

>>Minister Naqvi: Thank you very much, SP. Last winter, as you know, our government passed legislation that granted the province's independent energy regulator the power to end all winter disconnections and protect Ontarians, because no one, Speaker, should ever be put at risk of disconnection in the winter. Our priority is to make sure families and businesses have access to clean, reliable and affordable electricity. Speaker, while the ban on winter disconnections are ended on April the 30th, they are -- there are a number of government programs designed to help reduce the cost of electricity bills for vulnerable consumers. We encourage all

customers to contact their local utility about qualifying for programs that are in place to help. For example, Speaker, our government expanded the electricity support program such as the Ontario electricity support program and the rural and remote rate protection plan, which provides support to low-income customers and those customers with the highest delivery rates. These customers, Speaker, are seeing savings -- Of up to 40 to 50% off their electricity bills. Speaker, these are important programs that are available in addition to 25% off fair hydro plan.

>>MPP Yakubuski: Speaker, it is the disastrous energy policies of this government that led to the skyrocketing hydro prices and the skyrocketing number of people that were subject to winter disconnections in the first place. They had to act because of their mistakes in the energy policy. Signing exorbitant contracts under the green energy act with Liberal friends that the auditor general herself said were far in excess of the market value for electricity. Why would the Liberals now suggest that someone who cannot pay their bill in January can pay it in May, including arrears? Speaker, won't the acting Premier simply admit that their energies have been a disaster in this problem, in this province and that their government is not fit for re-election?

>>Minister Naqvi: Speaker, we have worked extremely hard to develop an electricity system that is clean, accessible and reliable. Speaker. And Ontarians should be very proud that, in our province, we do not burn dirty coal to produce electricity like the way Conservatives used to do and actually ran again and again. I continue to -- continue to burn dirty coal. Speaker. That is bad for our health. It's bad for our environment. Speaker, we have taken steps to insure -- that our electricity system is clean. Speaker, we have not stopped there. We have also made sure that there is a 25% reduction in all electricity bills. Across the province. What was the response of the Conservatives? They voted against that program. When we introduced programs like the Ontario electricity program