

From: Energy In The News (ENERGY) [energynews@ontario.ca]
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To: @ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations [ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations@msgov.gov.on.ca]; Anderson, Alexandria (OPG) [alexandria.anderson@opg.com]; Armstrong, Hillary (ENERGY) [Hillary.Armstrong@ontario.ca]; Barbaro, Rachel (ENERGY) [Rachel.Barbaro@ontario.ca]; Berg, Denna (ENERGY) [Denna.Berg@ontario.ca]; Bergen, Tom (OPG) [Tom.Bergen@opg.com]; Mary Bernard [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=Mary Bernard42a]; Berry, James (ENERGY) [James.Berry5@ontario.ca]; Biggs, Megan (ENERGY) [Megan.Biggs@ontario.ca]; Bozzo, John (OEB) [John.Bozzo@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Buccilli, Lina (OEB) [Lina.Buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Tim Butters [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=Tim Buttersb95]; Alexandra Campbell [/O=IMO/OU=MSX1/cn=Recipients/cn=Alexandra Campbell]; Campbell, David (ENERGY) [David.Campbell2@ontario.ca]; John Cannella [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=John Cannella5e4]; Carson, Cheryl (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI) [Cheryl.Carson@ontario.ca]; Cayley, Daniel (ENERGY) [Daniel.Cayley@ontario.ca]; Chatterjee, Jeet (ENERGY) [Jeet.Chatterjee@ontario.ca]; Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY) [Meaghan.Coker@ontario.ca]; Cooper, Sarah (ENERGY) [Sarah.Cooper@ontario.ca]; Crawford, Paul (OEB) [Paul.Crawford@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Dade, Christine (ENERGY) [Christine.Dade@ontario.ca]; Andrew Dow [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=Dowa]; Dykxhoorn, Sandra (OPG) [Sandra.Dykxhoorn@opg.com]; Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY) [Trevor.Esdaile@ontario.ca]; Evans, Karen (OEB) [Karen.evans@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Chuck Farmer [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=Chuck Farmerfa1]; Feather, Adam (ENERGY) [Adam.Feather@ontario.ca]; Gibbs, Diana (ENERGY) [Diana.Gibbs@ontario.ca]; Gruetzner, Ted (OPG) [Ted.Gruetzner@opg.com]; Hill, Allyson (ENERGY) [Allyson.Hill@ontario.ca]; Ho, Larissa (ENERGY) [Larissa.Ho@ontario.ca]; Hume, Steen (ENERGY) [Steen.Hume@ontario.ca]; Imbrogno, Serge (ENERGY) [Serge.Imbrogno@ontario.ca]; Imlay, Patrick (ENERGY) [Patrick.Imlay@ontario.ca]; Johnson, Paul (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI) [Paul.Johnson3@ontario.ca]; Kacaba, Jennifer (ENERGY) [Jennifer.Kacaba@ontario.ca]; Katona, Keley (ENERGY) [Keley.Katona@ontario.ca]; Kelly, Neal (OPG) [Neal.Kelly@opg.com]; Kinapen, Donna (OEB) [Donna.Kinapen@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Kitchen, Matthew (ENERGY) [Matthew.Kitchen@ontario.ca]; Kovesfalvi, Sylvia (OEB) [Sylvia.Kovesfalvi@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Landmann, Peter (ENERGY) [Peter.Landmann@ontario.ca]; Lars Hansen [Lars.Hansen@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Latto-Hall, Arla (ENERGY) [Arla.Latto-Hall@ontario.ca]; Lazakis, Chloe (ENERGY) [Chloe.Lazakis@ontario.ca]; Jane Leckey [/O=IMO/OU=EXTERNAL (FYDIBOHF25SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=e6d8e8002e2d4e27ace9fa4c15df6606]; Leung, Thomas (MOF) [Thomas.Leung@ontario.ca]; Lindsay, Ken (ENERGY) [Ken.Lindsay@ontario.ca]; Linington, Brenda (MOI) [Brenda.Linington@ontario.ca]; Mackie, Richard (OPG) [Richard.Mackie@opg.com]; Maguire, Lauren (ENERGY) [Lauren.Maguire@ontario.ca]; McGoey, Eric (ENERGY) [Eric.McGoey@ontario.ca]; McGrath, Jessica (ENERGY) [Jessica.McGrath@ontario.ca]; Montgomery, Kaitlin (MOF) [Kaitlin.Montgomery@ontario.ca]; Naveed, Fatima (ENERGY) [SOM.Fatima.Naveed@ontario.ca]; Nikolaichuk, Colin (ENERGY) [Colin.Nikolaichuk@ontario.ca]; Nelms, Scott (MOF) [Scott.Nelms@ontario.ca]; O'Donnell, Cheryl (ENERGY) [som.Cheryl.O'Donnell@ontario.ca]; O'Riordan, Eamon (ENERGY) [Eamon.O'Riordan@ontario.ca]; Pagel, Alexa (ENERGY) [Alexa.Pagel@ontario.ca]; Pelkey, Bryan (ENERGY) [Bryan.Pelkey@ontario.ca]; Jordan Penic [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=Penicj]; Pitkeathly, Doreen (ENERGY) [Doreen.Pitkeathly@ontario.ca]; Poirier, Linda (ENERGY) [Linda.Poirier@ontario.ca]; Rehob, James (ENERGY) [James.Rehob@ontario.ca]; Reid, Michael (ENERGY) [Michael.Reid@ontario.ca]; Rowe, Jennifer (OPG) [Jennifer.Rowe@opg.com]; Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY) [Craig.Ruttan@ontario.ca]; Sermat-Harding, Kaili (ENERGY) [Kaili.Sermat-Harding@ontario.ca]; Shear, Dan (ENERGY) [Dan.Shear@ontario.ca]; Simmons, Valerie (ENERGY) [Valerie.Simmons@ontario.ca]; Spence Lair, Marlo (ENERGY) [Marlo.SpenceLair@ontario.ca]; Spence, Marcia (ENERGY) [Marcia.Spence@ontario.ca]; Stoiko, Andrea (ENERGY) [Andrea.Stoiko@ontario.ca]; Sweet, Edward (ENERGY) [Edward.Sweet@ontario.ca]; Syed, Usman (ENERGY) [Usman.Syed@ontario.ca]; Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY) [Andrew.Teliszewsky@ontario.ca]; Thompson, Erin (ENERGY) [Erin.Thompson@ontario.ca]; Todd, Brian (MOI) [Brian.Todd@ontario.ca]; Tretiakov, Ilia (ENERGY) [Ilia.Tretiakov@ontario.ca]; Visheau, Vanessa (ENERGY) [Vanessa.Visheau@ontario.ca]; Waddell, Colleen (MOF) [Colleen.Waddell@ontario.ca]; Wall, Vanda (OEB) [Vanda.Wall@ontarioenergyboard.ca]; Whittington, Matt (ENERGY) [Matt.Whittington@ontario.ca]; Wright, Lindsay (ENERGY) [Lindsay.Wright@ontario.ca]; Yadav, Saurabh (ENERGY) [Saurabh.Yadav@ontario.ca]; Terry Young [/O=IMO/OU=MSX1/cn=Recipients/cn=Terry Young]
Subject: Hansard: McNaughton to Ballard -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is to the **Premier**. Last week I held my second rural and small-town poverty and jobs roundtable. One of the major topics at this meeting was the soaring hydro costs and how devastating they've been to people in small towns. Speaker, I don't need to tell the **Premier** of Ontario that electricity rates have more than doubled in recent years driving people into energy poverty. Yet no action was taken until her popularity in the polls plummeted. Her first step was to use taxpayers' money to create congratulatory ads. Speaker, will the **Premier** explain why it's more important to put out a series of partisan political ads than it is to actually fix the hydro crisis that her government has created?

>> **Premier Wynne**: Minister of energy.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to rise and talk about the Ontario fair hydro plan, which actually addresses the specific issues concerned by many families that live in the rural or northern parts of our province, Mr. Speaker. Because of that, Mr. Speaker, we acted. And so the rrrp is going to be increased, Mr. Speaker, significantly for many of those customers -- our two customers are one customer, Mr. Speaker. They're actually going to see not just 25%, Mr. Speaker, like every other family and small business and farm in the province. They're actually going to see between 40 and 50% reductions, Mr. Speaker, for those folks that are in rural and in northern parts of the province. And so, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make sure that the rrrp is enhanced. We're making sure distribution rates are fair for those folks that are in those parts of our province, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to bring forward other programs like the affordability fund that will also help those folks in that part of the province, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

>> MPP McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, back to the **Premier**. One of the many attendees at my recent roundtable was pastor Brian Horvin of the first Baptist church in Wallaceburg. Pastor stated Ontario's soaring electricity prices are emptying the charitable coffers of churches being tapped by parishioners unable to pay their power bills or afford grocery bills. Another story of heat or eat here in Liberal Ontario. Speaker, does the **Premier** think it's fair for people to rely on churches to cover basic necessities like heat, hydro and groceries in their communities? Or does she simply not care about the people living in small towns in rural Ontario who are stuck paying their bills?

>> Minister Ballard: Well, thank you, Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to follow up on discussion around poverty in Ontario. I think it shows the leadership of this government in establishing a ministry that focuses on Ontario's poverty reduction strategies. I want to let you know that yesterday we tabled with the legislature our poverty reduction strategy report, Mr. Speaker, that announces we've had a 20% reduction in child poverty in this province. I think that shows leadership right across, right across. Mr. Speaker, there's so much more that this province is doing when it comes to poverty reduction in general. Whether it be things like the free tuition for students, for the -- income pilot that we're offering. The energy costs with some of the strategies that we're undertaking. -- By and large, Mr. Speaker, we're focused on --

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