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Subject: Hansard: Horwath to Sandals -- Hydro Advertising

INSTANT HANSARD

>> 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 const 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.

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