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Subject: Hansard:Martins to thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of energy about a concern that my constituents have raise under Davenport. Last week the Ontario energy board made an announcement regarding new electclcity rates to be effective on may 1st. As the independent regulator of Ontario's energy sector, the O.E.B. Quasi-judicial board governs the sector. It sets electricity rates twice a year so Ontarians know what to expect with their bills. As members of this House know well, our government has recognized Ontarians want relief on electricity costs and we have acted. Our plan is to lower electricity bills by an average of 25% by this summer. I understand that the O.E.B. -- My question is for the Minister of energy about a concern that my constituents have raise under Davenport. Last week the Ontario energy board made an announcement regarding new electclcity rates to be effective on may 1st. As the independent regulator of Ontario's energy sector, the O.E.B. Quasi-judicial board governs the sector. It sets electricity rates twice a year so Ontarians know what to expect with their bills. As members of this House know well, our government has recognized Ontarians want relief on electricity costs and we have acted. Our plan is to lower electricity bills by an average of 25% by this summer. I understand that the O.E.B. --

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the member for that important question. I was pleased, Mr. Speaker, with the o.e.b.'s decision to begin lowering rates on may 1st, Mr. Speaker, and anticipation of our government's fair hydro plan. This is the next of several steps which Ontarians will see as we work towards bills being reduced by 25% beginning this summer, Mr. Speaker, with rates held to inflation for the next four years. The o.e.b.'s decision means bills will be reduced by 17% beginning may 1st. That's even earlier than expected, Mr. Speaker. The rest of our plan is intended to come into effect by this summer in order to achieve the rest of the promised savings, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. Would require to reduce rates again this summer when final legislation is passed to ensure Ontarians -- See the full benefit of our plan, Mr. Speaker, as soon as possible.

>>MPP Martins: Thank you to the Minister for that response and for his hard work on this file, on a file that is so important to my constituents. Our government heard from Ontarians who were struggling with the cost of electricity and that's why we introduced the fair hydro plan. It's also why this winter we gave the O.E.B. The power to ban power disconnections during the winter months. Several utilities actually already have this type of policy including Hydro One. In fact they had implemented a ban on winter disconnections and introduce add winter relief power to restore power to disconnected customers as part of a broader effect to be a more custom recall-focused company. I understand that yesterday Hydro One made an announcement where they extended their winter moratorium to provide even more support to customers. Would the Minister share with this House the details of that announcement and how it is providing further relief -- To Ontario rate pay sners.

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Speaker, again thank you to the member for the question. Yesterday, as the member mentioned, Hydro One announced they are extending their winter moratorium until the end of may. So Hydro One will be working closely with customers who have fallen behind on their bills, Mr. Speaker, and this extra time will allow customers to take advantage of some of the early savings from our fair hydro plan while they work with the company to make sure that they get back on the right track, Mr. Speaker. I was also pleased to see Hydro One take this step which provides just more evidence of their new customer focus at this company. And as part of yesterday he's nounsment, Mr. Speaker, Hydro One is also eliminating requirements for security deposits from residential customers as well as reducing deposit requirements for businesses, Mr. Speaker. This removes a substantial burden for many customers. And will put money back in the hands of Ontarians. These actions from Hydro One work together with our government's fair hydro plan, fair relief for everyone in this province.

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