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Sent: 2017-11-14 10:55:01 AM
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Subject: Hansard: Smith to Premier (Thibeault) -- Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan

INSTANT HANSARD

>>MPP Smith: Good morning. My question's to the Premier. Speaker, this morning global news reported that utilities in Ontario charged customers \$12.4 million just to send out disconnection notices last year. Some customers were billed as much as \$55 for a single notice of pending disconnection. A stamp is 85 cents, Speaker. An email is even less than that. Hydro One even admitted that the cost of sending disconnection notice is only \$1.05. Speaker, why does the Premier think it's fair that thousands of Ontarians, who already can't pay their hydro bill, are also being charged for the privilege of being told that they're going to be disconnected?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of energy is going to want to speak to the specifics of this notification but, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that what we know is fair is that, across this province, people are seeing a reduction of on average 25% in their electricity bills, Mr. Speaker, and people living in more remote and rural communities, up to a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker. We knew and we know that people were struggling --Look tristy prices, Mr. Speaker. That's what our fair hydro plan addresses, Mr. Speaker. It actually addresses the challenges that people were facing because, Mr. Speaker, we had made investments in our electricity system to make it reliable, Mr. Speaker. The system was not clean. It was not reliable. It is -- There was a cost associated with that but people have seen reductions in their bills, Mr. Speaker. That's what's fair.

>>MPP Smith: Speaker, for years, for three years, the Premier said that there was no crisis in electricity in Ontario. She didn't act until it became an election crisis for her and the Liberal government of Ontario. And we know that the fair hydro plan, which is really unfair, doesn't do anything to fix the problem in Ontario's electricity crisis. It just makes it worse. Speaker, the Ontario energy board doesn't require companies to track disconnection notices but most do, and we know that across Ontario roughly 1.5 million disconnection notices were sent out last year, 1.5 million, electricity that's so expensive that hundreds of thousands of Ontarians can't afford it and can't afford the disconnection notice they get for the power that they can't afford. Follow the logic here. Speaker, why is it that the government -- Is allowing outrageous profits to be made from customers who can't afford their hydro bills in the first place?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if we're following the logic, let's look at the very first thing that we did, which is a 25% reduction for every family in this House hold which they voted against, Mr. Speaker. Going on with that, Mr. Speaker, following the logic, all they would have to do is

look to what the O.E.B. Is doing, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. Is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of its customer service rules and we look forward to seeing that result later this year, Mr. Speaker. On top of that, if we're following logic, Mr. Speaker, which is something that they don't have on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. On November 15th, they are well aware, Mr. Speaker, that the O.E.B. Banned winter disconnections from November 15th until April 30th of 2018. The O.E.B. Has mandated that all customers who are currently disconnected be reconnected as soon as possible at no charge, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. --And their decision also requires the removal of load limiting devices and anything else Mr. Speaker That is affecting customers. That is something, Mr. Speaker, that we're supporting.

>>MPP Smith: Speaker, this is the Liberal legacy in Ontario. People are getting cut off of their electricity at record rates. Listen to this. Last year approximately 60,000 Ontarians had their power cut off. 60,000. We know now that across Ontario roughly 1.5 million Ontarians have been served with disconnection notices. That's one in every three homes is being hit with a disconnection notice. Welcome to Liberal Ontario. These are the numbers. You can't dispute them. And still utilities are charging up to \$55 for disconnection notices that only cost \$1.05 to actually produce. How the heck do you explain that, Mr. Speaker ? Speaker, why the most catastrophic mistakes of this government always seem to fall on the people of Ontario, who can least afford them?

>>Minister Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, so welcome to Liberal Ontario where your rates have gone down 25%, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to Liberal Ontario, where you're seeing more infrastructure built right across this province than ever before, Mr. Speaker. Welcome to Liberal Ontario where you don't have coal as part of your electricity system. Welcome to Liberal Ontario where we're raising minimum wage and looking after our workers, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on. We are very proud of our record and making sure that we've invested in health care, that we've invested in infrastructure, that we've invested in education and in advanced education, Mr. Speaker, in training, in research. You know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to welcoming people to Liberal Ontario, we do that with open arms. We're encouraging businesses. We're encouraging people. We're seeing more and more people come to Ontario. Our unemployment rate is at its lowest ever thanks to the Minister of economic development and growth. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take that member on any time to debate a Liberal Ontario and the benefits --

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