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Subject: Hansard: Smith to Thibeault -- Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of energy. The people's guarantee lays out Patrick Brown and the P.C.S' plan for hydro in Ontario. Under Premier Wynne and the Liberals, we know that hydro rates have tripled. In fact families are paying on average \$1,000 more a year than when the Liberal government was first elected back in 2003. The people's guarantee is a plan to get hydro back on track. It provides an additional 12% off hydro bills. That means the average House hold will save \$173 per year on their hydro bill under Patrick Brown and the Ontario P.C.S. So, Mr. Speaker, isn't that a plan that even the Liberals can get behind?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's becoming quite clear that, you know, the P.C.S and their leader can't be trusted. They've now decided to say anything to anybody to make sure that they can get elected. Months after trying to deny, Mr. Speaker, that our 25% reduction on bills for families and as many as half a million small businesses and farms by voting against our fair hydro plan, they're now sneakily, Mr. Speaker, including it in their own platform. Worse than that claim about reducing further rates is reckless and only opens up an even larger hole, Mr. Speaker, in their already gaping fiscal plan. I believe the proof is in the fine print at the back of their platform. Over \$12 billion, Mr. Speaker, in cuts. This includes over \$6 billion of across-the-board unspecified cuts and shifting of course, Mr. Speaker, conservation programs, cost from taxpayers, again making sure their fiscal hole continues to grow, Mr. Speaker. We've --

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, more Liberal spin. They're just hoping that something actually sticks but it's not. Just look at what our leader said this morning. He wanted you to consider this. Premier Wynne and the Liberals accepted \$1.3 million in donations from companies who receive the biggest contracts for energy that we don't need any longer in Ontario. That meant these insider contracts resulted in families overpaying on their electricity bills by \$9.2 billion. That's the biggest reasonable why our electricity bills are skyrocketing. Then to make matters worse, the Wynne Liberals sold off Hydro One. It was a fire sale to reward her donors, insiders and fat-cat friends. That's why this government can't be trusted after 14 long years. Mr. Speaker, I do wonder, when did the Liberals decide -- They were going to be for the insiders and not for the people that were paying the hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: It makes you wonder, Mr. Speaker, actually who is defending families? And on this side of the House we're defending families, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward a 25% reduction that all families are seeing. But it begs the question, Mr. Speaker, because, under their plan, costs are going to rise. Let's look at their carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that under their carbon tax scheme, you'll pay more and get less. Independent expert analysis from the C.D. Howe institute, for example, confirms this, Mr. Speaker, showing their carbon tax would add \$1,200 in annual costs per family. And this is more than any of the tax cuts that the Conservatives claims to be offering as well, Mr. Speaker. The "National post" has called it a shell game noting that any tax cut will be paid for by an 81% increase in the existing provincial tax on gasoline, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to energy, it is this government that has brought forward serious reductions for families from right across this province, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the Minister would rather talk about cap and trade than talk about hydro, because their record over the last 13 years is repugnant when it comes to the hydro plan. Our electricity plan, our hydro plan, unlike the Liberals', isn't a risky borrowing scheme. We're not going to spend billions of dollars in interest just to get through the next election, Mr. Speaker. Our plan, the people's guarantee, offers real lasting relief for the people of Ontario and their hydro bills. 12% more off hydro bills is the people's guarantee. We think families in Ontario deserve that after paying the fastest rising rates in North America thanks to this government. Mr. Speaker, don't the Liberals realize Ontario deserves long-lasting hydro relief?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that that party is guaranteeing is that everything is going to go up in Ontario. That's their guarantee, Mr. Speaker. They're actually even talking about our fair hydro plan, the 25% that we actually brought forward, and they voted against, Mr. Speaker. They talk about it all the time but they have nothing, Mr. Speaker, that is actually going to do anything that will actually help the families like the way we have done on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And given the gap that we know that is in their plan, Mr. Speaker, we know that across-the-board cuts are coming, just like the Harris years, putting both existing and future programs at risk that we already know investments like the \$300 million in home and school retrofits, the \$575 million in social housing repairs will be scrapped once the Conservatives drop cap and trade and create a more expensive carbon tax. But what else, Mr. Speaker? Are they going to cancel the oesp program? Are they going to cancel the first nation delivery credit? Are they going to make sure they eliminate the \$100 million affordability fund? Mr. speaker, all they know how to do is cut.

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