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From: Neil Brodie
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To: Rosemarie Leclair
Subject: Legislative affairs

New Democratic Party of Ontario

The New Democrats released 30 pages of documents obtained through an FOI that reveal the Ministry of Energy budgeted \$5.5 million for a multimedia ad campaign promoting the government's Fair Hydro Plan. Of that, \$2.5 million will be spent in the 2016-17 fiscal year and \$3 million is allocated for the 2017-18 fiscal year. The documents include a project management outline delivered to prospective advertising agencies and its contract with the selected firm, Rain43. The prospectus requested a "nimble" creative agency to execute a media campaign that "connects Ontario's energy policies, programs and rebates to a benefit for consumers" in order to counter "negative media coverage of rising electricity bills" including affordability issues for homeowners "with some people having to choose between paying for food and heating."

The documents also show the government intends to continue advertising the perks of the Fair Hydro Plan leading up next June's fixed election date.

Horwath said this is another case of the Liberals using their changes to government advertising laws to run partisan advertisements using public money. She said the \$5.5 million should be used to help get people's hydro bills down, not on partisan advertising.

Treasury Board President Liz Sandals said, "citizens are entitled to know what's going on with the government and that is exactly why we advertise, regardless of the program."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said there are still a lot of people who do not know about the Ontario Electricity Support Program and that is what he is trying to fix via advertising. He said his team is working with local distribution companies, Ontario Works and the Canada Revenue Agency to get more people signed up for the assistance program. Currently 232,115 customers have been signed up, out of about 500,000 spots. Thibeault said it was important to advertise the Fair Hydro Plan's 25 per cent reduction to hydro bills widely so people can plan their household budgets moving into the winter months

Question period

PC's

Hydro supply

- Brown asked about a recent round of FIT contracts that were awarded by the IESO last week. Brown said these expensive new contracts are for 150 MW of power Ontario does not need. "The definition of insanity is committing the same mistakes over and over again," he said.

- o He asked the government to "unequivocally" answer whether any negotiations are going on to buy more hydroelectric power from Québec.

- Thibeault said, "The premier and myself have been crystal clear. There's no new contract with Quebec."

NDP

Fair Hydro Plan

- NDP leader Andrea Horwath asked about the recently obtained FOI documents showing the government plans to spend \$5.5 million in taxpayer dollars to advertise its Fair Hydro Plan using ads that would not pass the auditor general's "smell test."
- Horwath said the province spent less than half of that amount to advertise the Ontario Electricity Support Program.
 - o She said the government should "just use that \$5.5 million advertising budget to actually help the people of Ontario deal with the cost of electricity."