



# Hansard Official Report of Debates

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

38th Parliament

## JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Member's Question

Monday May 1, 2006

### ENERGY RATES

**Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today is the day that consumers across the province will start to feel, again, the effects of your failed energy policy. On top of the health tax that your government has forced them to pay, higher taxes and fees, today they will start to feel the pinch of a further 16% in hydro rates across this province—55% since your government has taken office.

Minister, we know that this is a result of your failed energy policy and your irresponsible promise to shut down almost 25% of our generational capacity. People across this province need to know, as they face job layoffs and ever-increasing costs across this province—and you know the numbers, Minister; you have got the data: What can they expect, going forward, for hydro rate increases in this province this year, next year and beyond? Please tell them this, Minister.

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy):** I thank the member for his question. He does give new meaning to the words “new math,” though. The average increase across the province is 10%, and it does vary. There’s no question that this is the first time that you’ve had both distribution and rate increases at the same time.

There are ways and means that we can help people mitigate those costs. The first thing we did was put in \$100 million, which will actually serve up to 1.5 million people in terms of low income and fixed income. The other that we have done is put a 100-megawatt directive with the Ontario Power Authority, again, specific to social housing and low income or fixed income. That actually puts out a rate of about 1.8 cents per kilowatt hour, where we will exchange, replace, their refrigerators, their stoves, their windows, and look to ways to mitigate their costs. We do have in place, as well, a long-term strategy, working with? LEM, the low-income groups, on how we can work with and put together a policy, a far more comprehensive policy, to deal with—

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** I’m not really sure what the minister was trying to tell us there, but you know what? I don’t think Ontarians are sure either. They are seeing a price increase today of 16%—55%—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Stop the clock ...

(Mr. Yakabuski)  
They are seeing a price increase today of 16%, 55%—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Stop the clock. Order. I need to be able to hear the member ask his question.

**Mr. Yakabuski:** That's greatly appreciated, Speaker.

Minister, your answer does not wash. People in this province are facing job layoffs. And you know what? Under your government there are going to be a lot more of those low-income people who need help because they're going to be losing their jobs under your energy policy and your taxation policy.

Skyrocketing property taxes under your regime and skyrocketing fuel costs—add those to skyrocketing hydro costs and people in this province don't know where they're going to turn under this government. Where can we expect to see under policy that sees energy replacements in this province from unreliable sources, such as your Premier saying wind or volatile sources, such as natural gas that have seen increases in Massachusetts of 32%? Where can we see prices going forward in this province, so that people have some ideas of how much more money you're going to be taking out of their pockets—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. The question has been asked.

**Hon. Mrs. Cansfield:** The first thing we're going to do is be a little more upfront with the people of Ontario. Rather than hiding a billion dollars, like you did with an artificial rate cap, and then trying to put together a market with an antiquated Ontario power, we, in fact, have been straight. We will maximize our existing transmission and generation. We will build new, and we've already put in place—

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Where's the transmission, Donna?

**Hon. Mrs. Cansfield:** I said we will maximize existing transmission. Maximize existing transmission and generation, build new and create a conservation culture. The difference that we will do is, we will actually put the price upfront so people know the real price of electricity that they have. We will not hide it in an artificial debt that was \$24 billion that is finally coming down for the first time in many years, and we will be able to say to them, there are ways to mitigate those costs because we will put in place, and have put in place, strong conservation initiatives for the people of this province.