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

Oral Question

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Hydro Rates

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, yesterday you spent half your allotted time at the hearings for Bill 150 trying to discredit the report recently released from London Economics International concerning the astronomical increases in electricity prices we can expect under your legislation. Given your verbose protest but lack of any real evidence to contradict the report, we can surmise that they must have it right.

The Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association was also there yesterday, concerned for the future of Ontario jobs and, in fact, its entire economy under your act. When you were drafting this bill, you didn't even consult with a \$24-billion industry, employing 80,000 people in this province, for their views on how you and your act could decimate business in Ontario. Minister, why would you proceed without even talking to the people in this integral industry?

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Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I believe there was also acknowledgment from that very same group that the honourable member quotes that they were pleased that one of the strong signals we sent was our government's intention to invest alongside industry and commercial operations to lower their overall energy use with direct investment. The honourable member leaves that out.

To the point about the contracted study by executive summary that's been released so far by that group of consultants, the concerns that I raised remain exactly the same. They apportion costs in a way that costs are not apportioned in the energy sector: they didn't amortize them over the life of the asset, as is the normal case; they counted the costs for conservation programs but gave no benefit for reduced consumption on the bills of individuals; they assumed that increases in green energy will not replace other costs; and their very own study fluctuated wildly. I think for all of those reasons, it raises serious-

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, they did talk about energy efficiency and how you have not been doing enough to promote that in their industry. They also use 10% of the electricity produced in this province-10%. They believe that this province could benefit a whole lot

more if as much money was invested in making their businesses and other energy-intensive businesses more efficient as what you plan to spend on building new generation-unreliable, undispachable generation at twice the cost. Why wouldn't you, under your green disguise, do more to promote helping an industry be more efficient and more competitive and in fact create jobs in this province? Why wouldn't you consult with them? Why would you proceed? It's a \$24-billion industry with 80,000 jobs and 10% of the electricity in the province, and you couldn't even talk to them. Is this more about politics against policy in McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's always good when the honourable member is so excited that he gets tongue-tied.

I think that at the heart of it-< /p>

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. There have been a few comments that have been indirectly made to members.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, we do need to ensure that we treat one another with respect. Sly little comments like that don't help. There are others that have been made. I just ask everyone to be conscious of it.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that what we have is a comment from the honourable member on two points that I would like to focus on. First off, he talks about new generation, but yesterday in the House he was proposing that we just sign a contract for new generation on the nuclear front without regard for cost, without regard for reliability. But I think what's very-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member just asked the question. I trust you want to listen to the response-

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please have some respect for the Chair.

Hon. George Smitherman: Part of the cost associated with the \$5-billion incremental investment in the first three years of the Green Energy Act is \$900 million of investment in conservation programs, with large companies exactly like those that were represented yesterday.