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

Oral Question

March 24, 2009

Hydro Rates

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, at your recent press conference regarding the Green Energy Act, you were asked by members of the media how much the proposed act would add to the average electricity bill, to which you responded that it would only amount to 1% per year.

Minister, now that you've released the per-kilowatt-hour rates you're willing to pay under your feed-in tariff program, rates as high as 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour, what will the true increase be for Ontario families on their electricity bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: I anticipated a question of that form from the honourable member. When we did release the proposal, or I should say the Ontario Power Authority did-their proposed rates for the feed-in tariff-the member has chosen to focus in on certainly the highest rate, which is for a very small-scale rooftop solar which is designed to get many people in the province of Ontario, hopefully as many as 100,000, involved in being generators of electricity.

This would amount to about 1%, which is very clearly stated-1% of the overall energy supply mix met by that very, very expensive form of electricity generation. It's in keeping with the answer that I gave on the day that we presented the Green Energy Act. We anticipate, over three years, from 2010 to 2012, the first approximately \$5 billion of incremental investment, and over time, we expect that the Green Energy Act will contribute 1% per year to the growth of electricity costs for Ontarians, with opportunities for them to use less electricity as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think that everybody in this province supports and believes that we need to do a better job of promoting renewable, emission-free energy. But it's also the responsibility of the government to be straightforward with the facts. When a minister talks about investing billions and billions of dollars-\$5 billion in transmission, up to 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour for feed-in tariff rates-and there are other rates, at the 44-cent level, 19 cents per kilowatt hour for wind. At those rates, all of that is being put back to the base ratepayers of the hydro bill.

Will you not come clean to the people of Ontario and state clearly that your belief and position that it will mean 1% to the hydro bill is simply a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw his comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry; I withdraw it.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: There are a couple of things that I think are pretty important here. Firstly, it's wonderful to see the endorsement of the Green Energy Act and the principle of renewable energy. As the honourable member said, pretty much everybody-I think he said everybody in Ontario supports and believes that there should be more renewable energy. I think that's a good start. I appreciate the support from the honourable member.

I think one of the things that's important is that the Green Energy Act is about, on the one hand, creating the opportunity for more renewable energy, and on the other, providing people in their homes, businesses and institutions the opportunity to go about their lives and use less electricity and energy. This obviously balances off on the issue of cost.

1130

I would say to the honourable member that he really could do just a little bit better research. I have spoken about a \$5-billion investment, and I've been quite clear in saying that just about half of that will be focused on transmission and distribution. The honourable member, in his question, turned that into \$5 billion for transmission. I think it would be very beneficial if he took the offer that I've given him. Let's sit down and talk about this more so that I can show this on a-

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