

NOTES FOR A STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATURE
BY THE HONOURABLE GEORGE SMITHERMAN
DEPUTY PREMIER AND MINISTER OF ENERGY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PROPOSED
GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

QUEEN'S PARK

TORONTO, ONTARIO

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Mr. Speaker:

Since 2003, the government of Ontario has been moving forward with the most ambitious climate change initiative in North America – the elimination of coal.

Our progress to date – a renaissance of our energy system, reflected by billions in new investments – has been so successful that today, Ontario is raising the bar on our collective ambitions.

Mr. Speaker, if the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that has been introduced today is passed, it would make this province North America's green energy leader.

The Act ... which would in turn amend no less than 15 existing statutes ... has two equally important thrusts.

First off, making it easier to bring renewable energy projects to life.

And secondly, creating a culture of conservation, one where we go about our daily lives using less energy.

These two thrusts combined would support a new green economy for this province ... and help create sustainable green employment for Ontarians.

Economic modeling projects that the Act would help create more than 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in the next three years, Mr. Speaker.

Employment in construction ... manufacturing and assembly ... servicing and installation ... engineering and trucking ...

Vast job opportunities in more efficient building design and retrofits for architects, engineers, contractors and installers.

Work for builders, financiers, electricians and inspectors.

Jobs in technology as we build on our smart metering initiative and move toward a smart grid.

If passed, Mr. Speaker, the Act would turbo-charge the creation of renewable energy in this province ... and set the standard for green energy policy across this continent.

It would make this province the destination of choice for green power developers, and incent proponents, large and small, to develop projects by offering an attractive price for renewable energy AND the certainty that creates an attractive investment climate.

Certainty that power would be purchased at a fair price.

Certainty that wherever feasible the power would be connected to the grid.

Certainty that government would issue permits in a timely way.

If passed, the Act would ensure that new green power doesn't get tripped up in all kinds of red tape ... but instead that new renewable generation would be built and flowing into the system ... FASTER ... complete with service time guarantees on our processes.

And it would enable the government to set reasonable domestic content requirements for renewable power projects to ensure more dollars are spent right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, our proposed legislation would create a best-in-class renewable energy feed-in tariff.

A FIT that would offer an attractive price for renewable power, including wind (onshore and offshore), solar, hydro,

biomass, biogas and landfill gas ... and would not limit the size of projects.

A FIT that would guarantee that price for the life of the contract.

With this single bold move, Mr. Speaker, Ontario would join the ranks of global green power leaders like Denmark, Germany and Spain.

We would also adopt a new and very different approach to the development of the grid infrastructure necessary to take the energy to market.

Mr. Speaker, our green energy experiences over these past several years have told us volumes about where our best renewable opportunities lie.

Working proactively with our energy agencies we would initiate investments in the development of new transmission

capacity, and the Act would replace the snail's pace with a sense of urgency.

Nowhere would our intentions be clearer than when it comes to streamlining the cumbersome processes that have created a patchwork of municipal bylaws.

Like the Smoke Free Ontario Act that came before it, this Act would build on municipal leadership, uploading responsibilities to Queen's Park.

The current model, where different municipalities have imposed varying setbacks on wind projects, would be replaced by universal setbacks from adjacent homes and other sensitive areas.

The proposed legislation would co-ordinate approvals from the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources, into a streamlined process within a service guarantee. And so long

as all necessary documentation is successfully completed permits should be issued within a six-month service window.

And my ministry would emerge with new capabilities and new leadership to support the facilitation of renewable energy projects.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Act contemplates the emergence of thousands of smaller projects, especially in our urban areas.

The reliability of our electricity system would be substantially enhanced with distributed generation projects that, for example, transform roofs that currently reflect the sun to rooftops that put it to use.

For while the bill may be called the Green Energy Act, make no mistake that the conservation thrust is just as important.

Mr. Speaker, without a doubt the least expensive energy to be found is the energy that we don't use in the first place.

This legislation, and the policies that it engenders, seeks to create a culture of conservation.

And we know that Ontarians themselves support this. Their actions speak volumes of their intentions. Recall Earth Hour, when we banded together in respect of our natural environment.

One hour's worth of reverence that helps to stimulate awareness and to create momentum for the culture of conservation – a culture capable of easing the burden on mother earth and on our pocketbooks at the same time.

We've seen recent data that shows people are changing their behaviour. For example, when it comes to changing lightbulbs, a recent survey found that 84 per cent of

Canadian households have at least one “green” bulb in their home. We can build on that awareness to make even more impressive inroads.

If passed, the Act would amend Ontario’s Building Code, making energy efficiency a central tenet.

We’ll establish Energy Star as the energy efficiency standard so that household appliances sold in Ontario achieve continued reductions in their energy use.

Implementing standards for the efficient use of water...as this too has a direct impact on the electricity grid...

And building on the unanimous support offered by members of the Ontario Legislature to the bill introduced by the member for Ottawa-Orléans, my parliamentary assistant

Phil McNeely, this proposed legislation would enable us to mandate home energy audits on all homes – at the time of sale.

And we won't stop there. We must – and we will – take even bolder steps to address energy use in our government operations and those that we fund.

We'll establish Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) - silver as the standard for our new buildings, and we will work with our broader public sector players like colleges, hospitals, universities and municipalities to develop energy plans to reduce their energy consumption.

And in partnership with the private sector we will invest in making commercial and industrial operations more energy efficient and more productive at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, because all energy consumers would reap the benefits of an improved energy system, we want to recognize that our investments in certain initiatives and programs that would be made possible by this legislation would be borne through energy rates.

Mr. Speaker: This bill, this Green Energy Act, continues to transform Ontario's electricity generation system into one of the cleanest, greenest energy supply mixes in the world.

Indeed, we've made great strides already and the Green Energy Act would stimulate an even greater focus in this area. Make no mistake. The things that we want, that all Ontarians want:

A cleaner climate.

Jobs in the Green Economy.

Enhanced productivity.

A culture of Conservation.

And a break for Mother Nature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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