

*Power Lines*DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING HIGH TENSION LINES CROSSING
OTTAWA AND ST. LAWRENCE RIVERS

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil) moved:

That a humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all minutes of meetings, documents, telegrams and letters concerning discussions between officials of the Department of Transport and Hydro-Quebec relating to high tension electrical lines crossing the Ottawa river below Carillon and the St. Lawrence river above Beauharnois.

● (1700)

He said: Mr. Speaker, in response to my request for documents, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Collenette) told me that the documents in question were so voluminous that it would require an inordinate length of time to prepare them and it would be very costly. He then went on to say "I have, however, sent a copy to the hon. member." He did in fact send me a copy of the documents. Hon. members might ask why I am debating the issue today.

First of all, let me refer to the documents themselves which I have in my hands. It is true they number a dozen or so pages, which might be termed voluminous, but personally I do not think there would be any great problem in producing these documents for the public. However, one thing is abundantly clear. These documents are all in the French language. There is no English translation. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that some three or four weeks ago while we were talking about western grain rates, when documents were not made available to the public, it was because they were in the English language only. The documents referred specifically to the Crownsnest Pass rates for the movement of grain out west, and I felt they should be more readily available in the French language to the people in the east, particularly to those in the province of Quebec. As I said then, there was a hidden cost to the treasury, to the people of Canada and to the two-thirds of the population who reside in the east of something in excess of one half billion dollars which was going into the pockets of the western farmers. Although I did not disagree with the particular item, I felt it should be more widely publicized.

Today, the same thing applies. We have a set of documents in French only, supposedly voluminous, but I suggest the reason they were not tabled is because they are in one language only.

Electricity is the lifeblood of modern society and without it much of our technology and prosperity would not exist. Electricity is efficient, convenient, clean and easy to transmit and distribute. By the year 2000, we can expect the demand for electricity to be more than five times the rate of the last few years. By the year 2050, about 90 per cent of all Canada's energy needs will be satisfied by electricity.

New York state saves millions of barrels of imported oil by buying 800,000 kilowatts of hydroelectric power each year from Quebec. The 765 kilovolt transmission line is 157 miles long in the United States running from Massena near Cornwall, Ontario to Marcy, which is near Utica, New York state. New York has a 20-year contract with Hydro-Quebec.

Just over a year ago, the Quebec minister of energy announced increased exports of power to New York state. The minister estimated that New York state was saving over one million barrels of oil a month, and added that the state had imported 823 million kilowatt hours of electricity from Quebec in the previous year.

In 1975, in a document sent to me by Hydro-Quebec, it was estimated that the cost to heat a typical single family, by electricity was \$500, slightly more by natural gas and about \$200 more by oil. One is well aware of the relative change in the cost of these three heating fuels since 1975 and the difference, particularly with respect to oil, is likely to become even more accentuated.

Initial installation costs varied very little. In fact, at that time, an all-electric installation was fractionally less expensive. About a quarter of Quebec's total energy needs are met by electricity and it is hoped to raise that percentage to 40 per cent by 1990.

Five years ago there was considerable concern that persons living in the vicinity of these high voltage electrical lines were acting as guinea pigs and that the electromagnetic fields surrounding the lines affected both the animals and the human beings within those fields. Two doctors working on a research project at the veterans hospital at Syracuse, New York, arrived at such a conclusion. The Canadian minister of the environment, in answer to a question in 1975, suggested that studies were going on with particular reference to caribou. However, since then, nothing further has been heard from this ministry on the subject.

The only other reference was in the same year when a senior official of Hydro-Quebec returned from Russia with the information that a human being should not be exposed for more than three hours in the vicinity of these high tension lines, and for not more than ten minutes close to the conductors. The minister of communications at that time, in answering a question concerning radio and television interference, stated that there should be no significant interference. However, anyone who has operated a radio or TV set in the vicinity of a line knows that there is interference and, in fact, that there is a black-out area. This significant point is a reference to distance and not to extent. The then minister of transport also indicated that there is no change to flight patterns for small aircraft in the vicinity of these lines. However, once again, anyone who has piloted a plane, as I have, will recognize the potential hazard of high tension power lines. It is apparent that the minister of transport was more concerned with the assurance of adequate clearance over federal waterways for ship navigation purposes than with the hazard created for the users of private airfields.

I might say that in the documents given to me, which were in French, about the only item I found of interest was a rather unusual point stating that the clearance over the Ottawa River was to be 80 feet whereas the clearance over the St. Lawrence River was to be 75 feet. Since I am under the impression that most of our navigation takes its course along the St. Lawrence River, I question why there should be that difference. How-