

*Use of Solar Energy*

● (1652)

As we know, there is an extra cost in putting a solar system into a home.

To my way of thinking, it is not enough to restrict this idea to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. That is unfair. There are many homes built in this country which for obvious reasons are mortgaged by private means rather than through CMHC. There should be some method whereby private mortgages could be extended this same benefit. It is absolutely imperative that we have incentives.

I intend to deal for a few moments with those comments made by my colleague, the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger). Before doing so, I want to refer very briefly to one or two comments made by the Lakeshore members, Toronto-Lakeshore (Mr. Robinson) and Lachine-Lakeshore (Mr. Blaker). They made a very valuable contribution to the discussion this afternoon.

The hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore said that solar energy is free. That is a misstatement. Solar energy is not free. It carries with it a very high cost in its adaptation to useful purposes in our northern hemisphere climate. I do not know whether the hon. member meant the fact that the sun shining down on us does not cost anything. In fact, that costs us something as well.

Obviously in the larger metropolitan centres—and the hon. member for Toronto-Lakeshore should know this—zoning laws would have to be enacted prohibiting the obstruction of any building that would block the sun from anyone who has installed a solar heating device. If you knew there was a property immediately to the south of you on which someone intended to build a high rise building and you had put solar heating panels on your house, if a law was in place preventing anyone from shading your property it would effectively restrict the height of any building to the south. If there were no law, obviously putting on solar panels would be a tremendous risk. Anyone could build immediately to the south, southeast or southwest of you and block the sun. That would defeat your purpose. Your expenditure on solar panels would be for naught.

So there is indeed a cost, direct and indirect, in using solar panels. This is a very small criticism, but it is valid. It points out one of the major problems, particularly in urban municipalities, in using solar heat. The situation is not the same in the large rural areas such as those represented by the hon. member for Wetaskiwin and myself. However, there is that danger in our communities.

The hon. member for Lachine-Lakeshore made a particularly valuable contribution. However, I have to argue with him. He stated that solar panels used for space heating and hot water heating in fact paid for themselves. I have on my desk a volume over three inches thick which covers legislation passed in the United States.

[Mr. Ellis.]

I am sure members opposite are aware of the exposition which took place in New York City last September. It covered virtually all of the equipment made by solar heating appliance manufacturers. I have gone into a great deal of research. To the best of my knowledge, at this point in time there are very few solar heating units, particularly in Canada, which will pay their own way in cost savings. It is still cheaper to use fossil fuels to heat one's home. That is unfortunate.

The hon. member for Wetaskiwin mentioned the credit incentive. I intend to dwell on that for a few moments. The hon. member for Lachine-Lakeshore made a particularly valid point. He said this could be a major industry for Canada. Everyone knows that in Arizona you can use solar heating panels. We have all seen pictures of solar heating panels that completely heat a home. I would think that in Arizona there would be absolutely no problem whatsoever. I do not care whether it is energy in the form of hot air, hot water or some other medium; you have a vehicle to contain heat and then diffuse it when it is needed.

In places like Arizona and the southwest United States, there is no problem. However, the type of solar heating that is needed is the type which would suit the northern hemisphere, that part of Canada and the United States which lies north of the fortieth or forty-fifth parallel, going up, I suggest with some care, as far as the fifty-fifth parallel. That area contains a large number of people, all of whom could benefit from wide Canadian expertise in solar heating.

One way we could help tremendously would be to properly support the Canadian Standards Association in preparing standards. All members will concede that in a new industry like this there will obviously be fly-by-night operators. They move in, make a quick buck from an unsuspecting individual and move out again. That happens with every new industry that comes along. This happens not only in Canada, but in the United States and other areas. It happened when swimming pools became popular as well as asphalt driveways. It happens now in the construction industry in the building of chimneys. It happens in many areas and we have to put up with it.

In the few minutes I have left, I want to say how much I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Wetaskiwin. He pointed out that while the technology does exist, it is not all paid for. There must be a credit in order to help pay for this. The hon. member suggested a tax credit. That makes considerable sense.

The hon. member pointed out that in President Carter's energy package there is a tax credit that not only enables an individual to use solar energy as an alternative, but encourages its use. That is the key. There has to be some encouragement to develop a solar energy industry.

Possibly I should have mentioned it earlier, but I assume the hon. member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) includes in solar energy energy from wind. After all, wind is produced by the sun. In the county south of me, Wellington, a Mr. Ball has a solar wind-driven generating system in his home.