

John Root says hydro corridors should avoid good farm land

John Root, M.P.P. for Wellington-Dufferin went to bat for rural residents of his riding in a debate in the Ontario Legislature Thursday, March 28, suggesting the Government carefully consider the proposals of John Schneider of R.R. 2, Acton, for bringing hydro corridors from Bruce to Essa instead of through good farmland in Erin township and Halton Hills.

Mr. Root intimated Dr. Solandt's report recommending the corridors do not traverse some of the scenic and recreational land from Bruce to Essa but cross good farmland was insulting to farmers. "I think it is time the Government and Hydro realized that the production of food and good agricultural land are just as important or in my opinion more important, than preserving popular scenic and recreational terrain in Southern Ontario," he stated.

"This province has an abundance of recreational areas. It has a limited amount of choice agricultural land," he told the Legislature.

Following is a partial text of his remarks as reported in Hansard of that date:

During the years that I have served on the Ontario Water Resources Commission and the Environmental Hearing Board, I have sat on over 350 public hearings from one end of this province to the other; and I have found that at the public hearing the applicant is more conscious of his responsibility if he has to face the public and explain what he has in mind.

"In the main the public want information regarding the project that is the subject of the hearing before a decision is made. Most reasonable people accept sound projects if they at least have a chance to express their views and have the project explained.

"Mr. Speaker, to establish a corridor from Bradley Junction to the Pickering-Nanticoke line, Hydro held three series of meetings to get the reaction of local people. However, the meeting opened up to include an area from part way across Waterloo county, over Wellington county and over most of the county of Dufferin.

"These meetings were held in the first place to get the environmental impact of lines running through the area. The first series of meetings was to get the environmental impact on the whole area, regardless of where the lines might go. The second series was held on the basis of the layout of the first series and showed possible corridors. Now, in the third series, they have come out with a pretty definite proposal as to where the power should go through.

"I have attended six of these meetings and have watched the reaction of people. In the main, the farm people are reasonable people. Until they had some idea where the lines might go, they had little to say. But on the other hand the environmentalists, who are not particularly interested in the production of food but are more interested in maintaining the ecology, the wildlife, the recreational areas, were quite vocal.

"I think that this had some effect on Hydro's second series of meetings, when they came back with a number of suggestions on possible corridors. When the farm people began to realize that these corridors in many areas were going over good agricultural land, they began to become more vocal.

"An engineer in my home township of Erin, Mr. John Schneider, who had given a lot of thought to how best to get the connecting links built, made a suggestion that they bring all the power down in one corridor to join the Nanticoke-Pickering line at Highway 401 and go through the gap adjoining Highway 401.

"Hydro objected to this suggestion indicating they did not want all their lines together in case of storm or sabotage, or perhaps an airplane crash, which could really disrupt the whole system. They said they would like to have two lines. A suggestion was made that one line might cross the escarpment at Limehouse instead of bringing all of the power through west of Guelph.

"Mr. Schneider made another proposal, that they take the power across from Bradley Junction to Essa and bring it down to the Pickering-Nanticoke line on an existing corridor that goes north from Woodbridge and Kleinburg. Apparently at the present time there is space in this corridor for the line. This proposal would have widened the gap between the two lines and provided the protection that Hydro wanted.

"Mr. Speaker, you will find the reference to the Bruce to Essa proposal on page 54 of the Solandt commission report. It was argued that the use of this route would greatly increase the security of the power transmission from Bruce to Toronto load centre, and it would make it reasonable to concentrate the rest of the Bruce power and the power from Nanticoke in one corridor parallel to Highway 401.

"Solandt goes on to say that this proposal received considerable popular support at the hearings. As far as the commission knows there was no one in the area affected by the Bruce to Essa line at the meeting, so it was unlikely there would have been any opposition expressed. Ontario Hydro looked at the proposal very carefully and discussed the pros and cons in presentation and cross-examination before the commission. They say Ontario had repeatedly expressed its opposition to system R on both security and aesthetic grounds. During the cross-examination they did agree that the proposal - this is the Bruce to Essa proposal - would improve the security system for the short-term future, but felt that the Bruce to Essa proposal had no other advantages. Non-members can read the comments regarding the Bruce to Essa proposal on pages 54 and 55 of the Solandt report.

"I am interested in the last paragraph on page 55, where Dr. Solandt says:

Following the close of the commission hearings, the group submitted a final paper on their proposal. Further studies of the proposals convinced me that it would not be easy to find a socially and environmentally acceptable route for the Bruce to Essa line, because it might have to traverse some of the most popular scenic and recreational terrain in southern Ontario. Since Ontario Hydro presented convincing evidence that the Bruce to Essa line would not produce useful improvement in the transmission system, the commission concludes that no further consideration should be given to the Bruce to Essa line.

"Mr. Speaker, that comment really disturbed me. The opposition to the line was because it would traverse some of the most popular scenic and recreational terrain in southern Ontario. I think it is time that the government and Hydro realized that the production of food and good agricultural land are just as important, or in my opinion more important, than preserving popular scenic and recreational terrain in southern Ontario.

"On pages 26 and 27, Mr. Speaker, you will read Dr. Solandt's comments regarding the Limehouse crossing. Keep in mind that to reach Limehouse the power line will have to come over some of the finest agricultural land in Wellington and Dufferin counties. Indeed in the southern part of this line, as you come in to my home township of Erin and go on through into Halton Hills, you will find very scenic recreation areas that will either have to be affected, or the lines in my cases go across class 1 and 2 farm land.

"You will note on page 27 where Dr. Solandt says all available alternatives were carefully considered before the commission reluctantly came to the conclusion that on balance this was the route that the transmission line should take. That statement indicates to me that Dr. Solandt had some doubts that on balance the Limehouse crossing was the right crossing. So I suggest, Mr. Speaker, before any final decision is made regarding where the second line will go that very careful thought be given with regard to priorities.

"This province has an abundance of recreational areas. It has a limited amount of choice agricultural land. In my opinion to put the preference on the scenic and recreational areas above choice agricultural land is a wrong decision. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that a very careful analysis be made of the impact of bringing a line from the Bradley Junction to Limehouse as one of the proposed routes in Wellington and Dufferin counties, funneling them to the scenic township of Erin to cross the border into the Halton Hills to approach the Limehouse crossing to join the Nanticoke-Pickering Line.

"I can only say, Mr. Speaker, that the farm people of Wellington county are greatly concerned. The various lines that may lead into Erin township cross practically every municipality in the area that I have the honor to represent. I would be remiss in my duties if I did not say the government had better take another look at crossing over on low-grade agricultural land and coming down on the Essa-Kleinburg corridor which we are advised has space for another line. I know that Hydro feel that sometime in the future they may want that space, but with advancing technology and the possibility of underground lines in the future, surely we don't have to criss-cross over choice agricultural land when there are other alternatives available.

"Mr. Speaker, I want to be fair and say that the farm people appreciate what Hydro has done in the way of rural electrification. Hydro has completely changed the rural way of life. One of the reasons that I ran in my first election was that we were still farming with the same lamps and lanterns that our parents and grandfathers had used. In Dufferin 81 per cent of the farmers had no power, and 75 per cent in Wellington.



VISITORS TO Double Happiness restaurant on Queen St. within the next few days will find flowers gracing the counter, gift of the Acton Chamber of Commerce to new proprietors, Ping Sit and her son, Pat, who are running the establishment as co-owners and operators. Already customers are enjoying the new food fare at the restaurant where Canadian and Chinese food will be served.

Vandalism blamed for hydro damage

A series of complaints from residents in Erin township last Wednesday triggered an investigation by Ontario Hydro in Guelph.

According to one hydro spokesman, low voltage in the area of Hwy. 25 east to Osprey was caused by

damage to a voltage regulator. Investigators said the regulator had been put out of service when a series of 22 calibre rifle shells had been fired into it. The regulator, reportedly costing an estimated \$15,000, had to be replaced.

The spokesman said hydro discovered the regulator about 12 o'clock noon but O.P.P. constable, Mike Dowling of the Guelph detachment, reported the incident had occurred sometime earlier.

Recorded as malicious damage, the matter continues under investigation.

"All of that has been changed and we appreciate that. We know it is in the interests of everyone to have this grid system established. Since we are producing power by nuclear energy, from fossil fuels and from hydraulic power there has to be the ability to move power back and forth, but we are not happy to see the lines go over choice agricultural land if there are any reasonable alternatives. I realize that Hydro is in a difficult spot, having to conduct its own public hearings, and I can see the advantage of having an environmental assessment board looking at these projects instead of asking Hydro itself to hold the hearings.

"Mr. Speaker, I hope the explorers of Hydro corridors and other matters affecting the farm people in Ontario will receive very careful consideration in the Natural Resources policy field. I would hope the people of Ontario will realize they are going to have to pay more attention to the people who work seven days a week producing the food they consume, or they will find that fewer and fewer people will stay on the farm."

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By sprucing up homes and throwing out trash accumulated during the winter, a householder will not only make his home a brighter and pleasanter place to live, but will also eliminate fire hazards, he says.

Old newspapers, discarded clothing, furniture and old paint cans are combustibles on which fires feed. Fire losses throughout the land were tremendous last year, the district chief reminds people in his area. Property can always be replaced, but lives lost in fires can't.

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Double Happiness for restaurant owners

New faces greet customers at the location of the former G. & T. restaurant on Queen St. since last week's opening of the Double Happiness restaurant where Ping Sit and her son Pat are the new co-owners and operators of the food establishment.

The Sit family are not new to the game as restaurateurs. Mrs. Sit was affiliated with a restaurant in Hong Kong and Pat learned his trade while employed at the Hong Kong International airport in the catering division, serving food to all airlines.

"I had seven years there,"

said the Acton partner. He relates having come with his family to Georgetown from Hong Kong and, with a brother-in-law, ran the McGibbon hotel dining room until taking over the King Wah restaurant on Main St. Together, the two men operated the King Wah for two years.

"Just too many hours," said Pat who decided he wanted to move to the Acton community because he liked the small town atmosphere. "We made up our minds to move six weeks ago," said the proprietor who is

delighted at the Acton patronage.

New fare
Last week saw many customers visiting. Some were regular G. & T. patrons, others interested in tasting new cooking fare. Chinese foods and the previous menu is what the restaurant will be serving, according to proprietor Pat Sit who likes his new location.

Mums graced the counter for the opening for the Sit family, congratulatory gifts from the Acton Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Sit said a large picture had also been given to them from friends in Georgetown celebrating their new business venture.

365 day usage for Lions pool

"The Acton swimming pool when completed will be open to the public at all times when school is not in session," are the words of Lion pool canvass chairman Vic Bristow who reports a rash of queries on how available it will be.

Last week's Free Press indicated that weekends would be times allotted for public use and Lion Bristow felt that residents should

know that, aside from school activities, it would be definitely open 365 days of the year.

Closing
The chairman says, as far as he knows, the campaign headquarters on Mill St. will be closed at the end of this week. "If any resident is anxious to contribute and has not been contacted, just give me a call," says Lion Vic with continued enthusiasm.

"With headquarters closed down that will make me free to canvass." The chairman says that starting next week he will be out rounding up the canvass in areas not completely covered.

"A great campaign and one of the best canvass groups I've ever worked with," the chairman says. \$22,000 is the latest collection total and, with canvassers pulling weight, the complete campaign should be finished up by the end of next week.

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ART '74
Art students of Halton County will be holding a travelling exhibition to be set up and stationed at various schools in the district. Acton's M. Z. Bennett Auditorium will host the travelling display from April 17 to 19, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. An evening viewing will be held on April 18, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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