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Subject: Hansard: Anderson to Leal (Thibeault) -- Greenhouse Vegetable Growers

INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of agriculture and rural affairs. Minister, we have been hearing recently from members opposite making false claims. Despite what the opposition may believe, the industry is growing and has the full support of our government. We have committed more than 10.7 million to 440 projects in the greenhouse industry since 2013. And just last month, I had the pleasure of being joined by Minister at links greenhouse to announce the province is investing towards the greenhouse competitiveness and innovation initiative. In addition -- Minister, can you please explain what else our government is doing to support the greenhouse sector and update --

>> Minister Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Ontario's greenhouse sector is growing. Today we learned that natural fresh farms is building a new \$400 million distribution centre in wonderful leamington, Ontario. Recently greenhouse produced a hundred million dollar development. This builds on 81,000 jobs already in the sector. The Ontario greenhouse vegetable growers also expect the interest rate to keep growing by 150 acres a year. This is real growth regardless of what others may say. We're partnering with industry. Just last month, elite greenhouses in bowmanville Ontario, our government announced funding. The climate action plan allocated 150 billion to cover agricultural producers. This is the kind of innovation we're investing in Ontario.

>> MPP Anderson: Thank you to the Minister for that response. It's good to hear that the greenhouse industry is continuing to expand and invest in my riding of Durham as well as the rest of our great province. Just like any other business, there is a wide array of factors that impact industry. Our government works closely with industry stakeholders like the Ontario greenhouse alliance and more. And, one, we have heard from our industry partners and my constituents is over the cost of electricity concerns, concerns over the cost of electricity, Mr. Speaker. The government recently announced our fair hydro plan which will reduce bills by 25% on average this summer. Greenhouse owners are wondering whether the savings will apply to them. Minister, please share with the House how the fair hydro plan will reduce --

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the member for the question and for his hard work. It is a pleasure to be able to speak about our government's fair hydro plan, meerk. Part of the plan involves logo the threshold. Participants in the ITI program can save as much as one-third off their electricity costs. We will be lowering the threshold from 100 megawatts to 500 kilowatts. Greenhouses will be counted among that group, Mr. Speaker. Any greenhouse that uses more than 500 kilowatts in electricity demand will be eligible for that program. As members of this House know, Mr. Speaker, Ontario farms are benefitting from Ontario's fair hydro plan. That means for those greenhouses who don't qualify for the ITI program, they will still be eligible, Mr. Speaker, for that 25% reduction as well.

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