

Rick Lindgren

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Subject: transcript of Peter's question and press releaes from yesterdayafternoon

June 14

Electricity Supply

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. A legal opinion prepared by one of your government's senior policy advisors says the province's energy supply mix plan is required to undergo a full provincial environmental assessment. Now that you've finally announced your plan and you've directed the OPA to implement it, when will you announce the provincial environmental assessment that's required under Ontario law?

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(Mr. Tabuns)

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1510

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to speak in this House about the responsibility that I have to make sure that Ontarians are protected as we build new generation capacity in this province, as we build solar and wind and natural gas to replace dirty coal. Every single one of those projects will go through an environmental assessment process to make sure where should they be built and how can we make sure that Ontarians are protected.

When we go forward with a nuclear facility, that will be the subject of a federal environmental assessment. But be clear, the province will be active participants at the table to make sure that Ontarians are protected. This makes sense because the environmental assessment process examines concrete projects. We need to decide whether they should be built, where should they be built, how should they be built and we can move forward and replace generation capacity in protecting Ontarians.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Tabuns: It's not surprising that the McGuinty government doesn't want to meaningfully consider alternative power sources to nuclear reactors, alternatives like efficiency and conservation. It's not surprising that you don't want to put the legacy of cost overruns, unreliability and nuclear waste—put those legacies out there for

public scrutiny by people who are expert in the field.

You have a responsibility as Minister of the Environment. You can read the act. You can do what's right. When are you going to announce that there will be a full, provincial environmental assessment of this plan?

Hon. Ms. Broten: If the member did read the act and he did take a look at the opinion, he would understand that broad government policy, abstract in nature, is not subject to the Environmental Assessment Act. What is subject is project-specific. Let's not bring an omnibus package that's abstract in nature and examine it. We're going to examine every single project as we move forward. Broad government policy has never been the subject of the Environmental Assessment Act. The opinion of which you speak is an argument for inclusion. It is not appropriate. The demand-supply plan that my friend is speaking about specifically looked at projects. It did not look at an omnibus package, it was project-specific wrapped in one. We're not going to wrap it in one. We are going to take each specific project to the people in this province and we're going to make sure that they're protected. We're going to bring them to the table and they're going to have their say, one by one.

June 14, 2006

McGUINTY'S ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MISSING IN ACTION ON NUCLEAR FILE

Queen's Park – NDP Environment Critic Peter Tabuns says the McGuinty government must conduct an environmental assessment on the government's energy supply mix in order to meet its obligation to protect Ontarians and the environment.

"The McGuinty government's energy supply mix plan is full of broken promises on the environment – no coal phase out, sidelining of safer and sustainable solutions like energy conservation, tough efficiency standards, and renewables – while making way for the rebirth of expensive, dirty and unreliable nuclear power," said Tabuns.

"The McGuinty government can't run from its responsibility under the Environmental Assessment Act," said Tabuns. "A legal opinion co-authored by a senior policy advisor in the Environment Minister's own office clearly concluded that the McGuinty government's energy supply mix plan required a provincial environmental assessment," said Tabuns.

Legal counsel for the Canadian Environmental Law Association has stated that the McGuinty government's Integrated Power System Plan (a.k.a. energy supply mix plan) is a public sector "plan" to which Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act applies, unless the McGuinty government chooses to exempt their plan from the Ontario environmental assessment process.

"I sincerely hope that the McGuinty government is not waiting for a Friday afternoon to

announce it's exempting the misguided energy supply mix plan from the provincial environmental assessment process," said Tabuns. "Ontarians are entitled to a provincial environmental assessment to compare safer, cleaner and more sustainable alternatives to nuclear power, and to look at the government's failure to move on energy conservation and efficiency standards," added Tabuns.

"The electricity plan that was presented yesterday by the McGuinty government begs the question – where is the Minister of the Environment on this file? Its time for her to step up and protect Ontarians and our environment from the short and long-term implications of Dalton McGuinty's mega nuclear scheme and coal closure climb-down."

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