

Nuclear Plan Exempted from Environmental Review

Public right to know denied say environmentalists

Toronto, June 15, 2006 - Environmental groups condemned the McGuinty government's move to exempt its \$83 billion electricity plan from an environmental assessment. The exemption was provided via a regulation adopted by the cabinet on Monday.

In March, Greenpeace the David Suzuki Foundation and the Pembina Institute released a legal opinion, prepared by the Canadian Environmental Law Association, which concluded that the Integrated Power System Plan to be developed by the Ontario Power Authority was subject to the province's Environmental Assessment Act. An environmental assessment of the plan would allow for an objective examination of the province's electricity needs and alternative energy strategies. Such a review will not be possible before the Ontario Energy Board or under the federal environmental assessment process.

The government's exemption of its energy plan from an environmental assessment demonstrates the correctness of CELA's Legal opinion, the environmental groups say. The exemption also reverses public commitments by Premier McGuinty, who on December 15, 2005 assured the Legislative Assembly that government's electricity plan would be "the subject of an environmental assessment."

"In exempting the plan from the Environmental Assessment Act, the government is depriving Ontarians of the opportunity to fully understand the risks and costs of the province's electricity plan, and to assess the viability of alternatives to it" said Dr. Mark Winfield, Director of the Pembina Institute's environmental governance program. "The exemption continues the 'let's make it up as we go along' approach to electricity policy that we have had for the past four years" added Dr. Winfield.

"An Environment Minister should stand up for the environment, but Minister Broten is caving in to the nuclear industry and letting it rewrite Ontario's environmental protection laws. " said Shawn-Patrick Stensil of Greenpeace Canada.

On Tuesday, the McGuinty government released the government's energy plan, calling for a \$46 billion to be spent trying to rebuild all of Ontario's ageing nuclear reactors and to build new reactors for the first time since 1973. The plan was decried by environmental groups for failing to fully develop green power alternatives that Ontarians support, such as energy efficiency and renewable energy. Energy Minister Dwight Duncan reiterated his stated interest for a 'fulsome debate' on the future of nuclear power despite the fact that the government has avoided any independent or objective debate on the province's energy future over the past year.

"The public needs to know what the best and most reliable energy options look like. And we also need to understand the serious liabilities of the government's current energy plan." said **Jose Etcheverry of the David Suzuki Foundation.**

- 30 -

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