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From: "Northwatch" <northwatch@onlink.net>
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Subject: [Energy-vision] Ontario's power plan under fire

Ontario's power plan under fire
Groups oppose report calling for major investment in nuclear power

By Denis St. Pierre/The Sudbury Star
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Ontario Energy Minister Donna Cansfield defended her government's commitment to renewable energy Friday after those efforts were disparaged Friday in Sudbury during a hearing into the province's future electricity supply mix.

"We've put in more renewable energy in this province in the last two years than any other jurisdiction in North America," Cansfield said in an interview outside the hearing room at the Holiday Inn.

Cansfield did not answer questions from the public during the hearing, but she spoke to reporters about the challenges facing the Liberal government in deciding how the province's electricity demands will be met in coming decades.

The government is holding hearings in 12 cities in Ontario to get public input on a report prepared by the Ontario Power Authority for the province.

The OPA report calls on the government to invest significantly in nuclear energy, while also expanding into wind and other renewable power supplies.

Cansfield said she will consider the public response to the OPA report before deciding on the plan's fate in coming weeks.

Several speakers at Friday's hearing lamented that the Liberal government and the OPA report fall far short on their commitment and investment not only for renewable and alternative energy supplies, but also for large-scale conservation programs.

Rather than making such huge, culture-changing investments and commitments, the government "takes a supply-obsessed approach" that largely fails to curb ever-growing demand, said Brennain Lloyd, coordinator of the environmental group Northwatch.

Lloyd, of North Bay, also criticized the public consultation process as inadequate, noting Sudbury is the only city in northeastern Ontario to have a hearing.

Whitefish resident Tom Price questioned the OPA's proposed increase in natural gas-burning plants to generate electricity, as well as the Liberal government's plan to phase out coal-fired plants by 2009.

With coal in abundant supply, the government should take a closer look at new technologies that provide clean burning of coal, Price said.

"But we appear loathe to do that," even though the increased use of natural gas plants will be a short-term solution, he said.

"Are we going to be faced again in 2025 with replacing all those natural gas plants back to coal?" Price asked.

One speaker assailed Ontario's target of using wind power to provide five per cent of the province's electricity needs, noting jurisdictions such as Germany have their sites set as high as 48 per cent wind power generation.

But Cansfield maintained the province's efforts in renewable energy and conservation are ambitious.

"Could it be faster? Possibly, but we've done more in two years than was done in a decade" by previous governments, she said.

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