



Canadian Environmental Law Association
L'Association canadienne du droit de l'environnement

243 Queen Street W., 4th Floor, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z4, telephone (416) 977-2410

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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JUST WHISTLING DIXIE (IN THE DARK)
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY REPORT MEANS
HYDRO - BUSINESS AS USUAL

The report of the Select Committee on Energy is attracting considerable attention because it recommends the completion of the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station. Of an even more far reaching implication, however, is the Committee's failure to address the root causes of the Darlington dilemma.

In leaving undisturbed Hydro's monopoly over information, resources and decision-making authority, the Committee has left intact a monolithic system that has been singleminded in its pursuit of large capital-intensive mega energy projects such as Darlington. By failing to recommend needed reforms the Committee has doomed us to repeating the mistakes that have led us to our present predicament.

The Committee's report is particularly disappointing when compared with the recommendations of the McDonald Select Committee in 1976 and the Royal Commission on Electrical Power Planning in 1981. These earlier reviews of Hydro affairs canvassed precisely the same issues and offered dozens of substantive recommendations including the need for more efficient, smaller and environmentally viable solutions to our energy service needs. By comparison, the recommendations of the Andrewes Select Committee are a pale imitation of those earlier reports. "By offering only a watered down version of earlier Hydro enquiries, this Committee is taking several steps backward during a time when progress is urgently needed," said CELA lawyer Steven Shrybman today.

A list of the major shortcomings of the Committee's report would include:

- Its failure to establish an Ontario Energy Conservation Corporation specifically designed to implement energy efficient measures proven to be cheaper, more efficient and environmentally sound than large scale supply options. By

leaving conservation to the devices of Ontario Hydro, the Committee has assured that no more than lip service will be paid to options that would otherwise contribute significantly to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Province;

- It's failure to remove from Hydro its exclusive prerogative to plan the electrical system will perpetuate a system that leaves issues of major public policy importance to be privately and unaccountably decided by Hydro's Board of Directors;
- It's failure to endorse the environmental assessment process as the essential planning tool has ensured that major environmental, social and economic costs of mega energy projects will continue to be disregarded;
- It's failure to recommend intervenor funding to facilitate informed public participation in the planning and licensing process will perpetuate the inequities of present public hearings that have thoroughly undermined public confidence in Hydro endeavours;
- It's failure to recommend an energy tax credit has perpetuated a rate structure that imposes the highest electrical rates upon those least able to afford them.

Government's failure to implement the sound and unanimous judgment of earlier reviews of Hydro affairs has led to the ignominious choice presently before us between an unnecessary nuclear generating station or the disastrous consequences of writing off seven billion dollars worth of public investment. By failing to address the root causes of the problem, the Andrewes Select Committee has made even more likely the prospect of confronting a similar dilemma in the early 1990s when Ontario Hydro announces the need for additional nuclear generating facilities. Ontario Hydro will sell that proposal, as it has all others, by terrorizing us with the prospect of freezing in the dark. By failing to recommend action that would save us from that dilemma, the Committee has proven itself to be profoundly shortsighted.

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For more information, contact: Steven Shrybman at 977-2410
or 653-4029