



Ontario's Nuclear Follies: McGuinty Considering Building More Reactors.

As if sixteen ailing nuclear reactors and 45,000 tonnes of highly radioactive nuclear fuel waste was not enough atomic trouble, Premier Dalton McGuinty is thinking of raising the nuclear stakes. Doubling them, in fact.

In a whirl-wind of last minute community "consultations" the Ministry of Energy set up show in the basement of a Sudbury hotel one mid-February evening to hear from the people of northeastern Ontario on recommendations they have received from the Ontario Power Authority on how to meet Ontario's electricity needs over the next 20 years.

"These consultations provide opportunities for Ontarians to ...share with us their views on the (Ontario Power Authority) report," said Energy Minister Donna Cansfield in a government news release. "It's important that we hear from all Ontarians on the energy choices that are available to address the province's long-term electricity needs."

Cansfield sat quietly at the back of the room through the two hour session in Sudbury on February 17, never introduced and not even acknowledged by the professional facilitator hired to keep the show running smoothly.

And quite a show it was. The sixty or so people who managed to make it to the meeting, despite short notice and a severe winter storm, took turns lining up at two microphones to voice their concerns about the OPA recommendations to build more nuclear reactors while ignoring huge potential for energy alternatives and efficiency. Speaking to a series of slides summarizing the OPA report's world-view on a short list of pre-selected topics (including natural gas, coal, nuclear, renewables, conservation) the group was intelligent, passionate, and impressively

North Shore Threatened with Nuclear Expansion

Blind River Mayor Bob Gallagher is trying to revive a 30-year-old study to build a nuclear reactor somewhere along the North Shore of Lake Huron, and is soliciting support from communities along the Highway 17 corridor from Thessalon to Spanish. According to Gallagher, Elliot Lake has said they'll support the reactor proposal if Blind River supports a connecting link between both communities.

The Mayor of the Township of Huron Shores disagrees with Mayor Gallagher's a view that

well informed. Environmentalists, students, farmers, renewable energy suppliers, municipal politicians and other members of the public voiced strong support for renewable energy and conservation, and harsh criticisms of the shoddy consultation process that left most people outside of the conversation. And one message was clear: no more nukes!

In December 2005 the Ontario Power Authority released its recommendations to the provincial government on Ontario's electricity mix. Asked to prepare a report providing advice to the government on how Ontario's could meet its electricity needs in the future, the Ontario Power Authority came out with its nuclear guns blazing, recommending a \$40 billion dollar investment to double Ontario's fleet of nuclear reactors.

The OPA report greatly underestimates the amount of electricity that can be saved through conservation and efficiency, and the amount that can be generated using renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. It then compounds those failings by over-estimating the amount of electricity that will be needed over the next twenty years, estimating growth in demand at almost 1%. That's twice the rate of growth since 1990 and contradicts a trend of declining electricity growth rates over the last 50 years. By combining low estimates for conservation and renewables and inflated estimates for future electricity demand, the OPA manufactures an electricity supply crisis and then offers the magic solution: safe, clean, and affordable nuclear power. Of course, the nuclear option is not safe, and its certainly not clean, and it is absolutely not affordable, but those are just more details that didn't make it into the OPA report.

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the 30 year old study would only need updating, saying that " full new approach would need to be done."

Huron Shore's council was considering passing a resolution supporting Blind River's quest for a reactor, but did not, in part due to a delegation of cottage owners who expressed opposition to the idea.

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The OPA estimates for electricity supply from renewable energy sources are pitiful. For example, the OPA target for solar photovoltaic power is 40 megawatts by 2025. Compare this to Germany, where 40 MW of solar power is currently being installed every 6 weeks. OPA estimates for wind power excluded 1,500 kilometres of shore line with great energy generating potential to arrive at an estimate of less than half the amount of wind generation potential that has been estimated by the Canadian Wind Energy Association (the Canadian Wind Energy Association estimates that 30% of Ontario's electricity needs could be met by wind by 2025). Similarly, the OPA ignores huge potential for energy savings through conservation and efficiency measures, and set a target of only 5% for conservation, even though their own reports show a potential for seven times as much.

On the nuclear front, the Ontario Power Authority went big, recommending a \$40 billion investment to double Ontario's nuclear fleet. Defying logic and history, the Ontario Power Authority report predicts that a new suite of nuclear reactors will operate at an 85% capacity factor, compared to the 51% capacity factor which has been Ontario's experience with existing reactors.

The Ministry of Energy furthers the folly in its "fact sheets" summarizing the OPA report, saying that "once built, nuclear plants can provide a constant supply of energy at stable prices". The supply may be constant when the reactors are operative, but for much of the time a good number of them are shut down for maintenance, repair, or retubing. As for prices, the one thing that nuclear power can be relied upon is to deliver electricity at a high per unit cost, and at a cost that is consistently higher than has been projected before the reactor's construction or commencement of operations. Construction of the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, Ontario's most recent reactor build, began in 1979 with a predicted price tag of \$4 billion dollars. Completed more than a decade later, the final price tag was \$14.4 billion. So if the OPA's \$40 billion nuclear spending spree is translated into Darlington dollars, Ontario's tax payers and rate payers will be on the hook for \$144 billion. And that just gets the reactor

to start-up. Costs keep adding up when you add in the inevitable but very expensive repairs, and then continue into perpetuity as the bills roll in for the cost of managing another 145,000 tonnes of highly radioactive nuclear fuel waste.

Nuclear Junkmail

After repeated promises last year to have a full public debate before any decisions were made in favour of nuclear power, the provincial government was poised to keep its review of the Ontario Power Authority report and recommendations internal. Then in response to pressure from environmental groups, opposition parties and others it launched a whirlwind tour of 12 cities in three days, on less than two weeks notice. The format was an open house during the day, and a two hour town hall meeting in the evening.

Tightly controlled and offering limited information, the sessions drew fire across the province from people concerned with the OPA's reckless recommendations and angered by the Province's slapshot means of soliciting public comment. And while those were underway, the printing presses were hard at work, churning out \$1.1 million worth of pro-nuclear junk mail. Titled "Our Energy, Our Future", the 12 page large-print-lots-of-graphics booklet started landing in the mailboxes of 4.6 million households in Ontario 3 days after the public consultations closed.



Not only does the pamphlet parrot the Ontario Power Authority's myths and misinformation about the glories of nuclear power, it is misleading in what it doesn't say: that there is no evidence to support the Ontario Power Authority's (OPA's) projection that electricity demand will grow by 20% by 2020; that Ontario is one of the biggest per-capita electricity consumers in the world; or that because of the poor performance of Ontario's nuclear reactors, Ontario Power Generation had to increase the output of its dirty coal plants by 120% between 1995 and 2003. Even more telling, the pamphlet which is supposed to be all about soliciting the public's views on Ontario's electricity options didn't provide an email address, a phone number or a fax number, and didn't provide any deadline for public comments.

For northern Ontario, the bad news in the OPA report is not limited to the nuclear nonsense. The OPA also opens the door to electricity imports from Manitoba, which would catalyze the building mega-dams in northern Manitoba, but also require construction of a high voltage transmission corridor from the Ontario-Manitoba border to the power-hungry markets of southern Ontario. No detailed plans have been sketched out yet - or at least none that are publicly available - but it's safe to assume that it will follow the same model as the Ontario-Manitoba Interconnection Project that was kicked around in the early 1990's. That plan featured a 500 kilovolt high voltage transmission corridor which would serve as an electricity autobahn, shooting the electrons right past northern communities, and offering no opportunity for electricity to be stepped down to supplement or stabilize local electricity needs, and no opportunity for electricity to be stepped up, providing transmission services for new and emerging renewable energy projects across the north.

Strategies for a Nuclear Free Future
Saturday
April 29, 9:30 - 4:30
4th Floor Resource Room

St. Andrew's Place, 111 Larch Street, Sudbury

Morning: regional roundtable and Northwatch's Annual General Meeting
Afternoon: Strategy Session on Nuclear Power, Nuclear Waste, and a Nuclear Free Ontario
\$10 registration includes lunch • Childcare must be requested by April 21
Please pre-register by calling 705 497 0373 or email northwatch@onlink.net

Coming Right Up Calendar of Events

April 22 - Sudbury Earth Day Festival, 10- 4, Sudbury's downtown Market Square, hands-on activities for children, adult workshops, live entertainment, eco-friendly displays, good food, hourly door prizes, Smart Car display, free tree giveaways and a light bulb exchange! Free!

April 22 - Earth Day! Visit www.earthday.ca for information, ideas, and events listings

April 26 - 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, when one of four reactors went out of control, creating explosions and a fireball which blew off the reactor's heavy steel and concrete lid. The Chernobyl accident killed more than 30 people immediately, and as a result of the high radiation levels in the surrounding 20-mile radius, 135,000 people had to be evacuated; radiological effects were experienced throughout Europe and Scandinavia. Events are planned worldwide. Visit www.chernobyl.info

April 29 - Northwatch Spring Meeting, 9:30 to 4:30, 4th Floor Resource Room, St. Andrew's Place, 11 Larch Street, Sudbury, visit www.northwatch.org

May 5-7 - Regional Forum for members of Ministry of Natural Resources' Local Citizens Committees, Cochrane, visit www.northeastforest.net

May 6 - GREEN ENERGY (Solar, Wind, Earth) Introductory one-day seminar introduces the key concepts of solar and wind energy collection systems, 10 am to 4 pm, \$65.00, 9550 Pine Valley Drive, Woodbridge, visit www.kortright.org Also on August 26, September 17 and 23

May 6-7 - ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION Conference "Environmental Education: Gateway to the Future", YMCA Environmental Learning Centre, Waterloo, Ontario. For more info visit www.osee.org

June 5 - Orientation to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act This one-day course provides participants with a good overview of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Visit www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca

June 9-11 - Great Lakes United's 24th Annual General Meeting, Madonna University, Detroit, Michigan, "Time to Review", visit our website at www.glu.org

August 18-20 - Northwatch Summer Meeting, Chutes Prov Park, Massey

October 19-21 - Canadian Environmental Network Conference on the Environment and Annual General Meeting, Montreal, visit www.cen-rce.org for details



North Shore Threatened with Nuclear Expansion - Blind River pushes for nuclear reactor; uranium refinery under expansion

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Reportedly, Ontario Power Generation is looking at two potential sites for a new reactor, one at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, about 70 km east of Toronto and the other at Wesleyville, just outside Port Hope.

At the same time as Blind River's Mayor is promoting a nuclear reactor for the North Shore, two federal environmental assessments are underway for expansions at the uranium refinery in Blind River.

The CNSC announced a review of a

proposed expansion to the incinerator at Cameco's refinery in November 2004, to increase the capacity of the incinerator to handle contaminated "combustible by-product" from Cameco's Blind River and Port Hope operations. The installation of an oil injection system would allow the incineration of contaminated waste oil, containing small amounts of uranium that is currently stored in drums at both the Port Hope and Blind River operations.

A review was announced in July 2005 of a proposed increase to the annual

licensed production capacity of the Blind River Refinery from 18,000 tonnes uranium as uranium trioxide (UO₃) to 24,000 tonnes uranium as UO₃.

According to the review notice "the proposed increase in annual production would be achieved by making minor process modifications to the current circuits". Cameco's documents cite "market opportunity" as the rationale for the production increase.

For more info visit www.northwatch.org

Freshwater aquaculture - a boon or a bane?

A conflict is brewing - or raging, in some quarters - over whether freshwater aquaculture is a good thing or is something that is ruining our pristine waters. The debate even rages within different departments of the same government ministries, with conflicting objectives of expanding private commercial open net-cage aquaculture operations or protecting aquatic ecosystems.

The Northern Ontario Aquaculture Association (NOAA), representing some 13 open cage farmers and fish processors, was founded in 2003 with a \$157,500 grant from FedNor and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The balance of the \$265,000 startup cost was provided by the private sector. Marcel Gervais and his son Bruno Gervais, who also run Gervais Forest Products, are hoping to turn the Sudbury region into the fish farming capital of Northern Ontario by raising tens of thousands of rainbow trout and arctic char.

Environment Canada, along with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, initiated a working group comprised of industry operators, academics, government representatives from MNR, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ontario Ministry of the Environment. It is called the Ontario Sustainable Aquaculture Working Group (OSAWG) and its mandate is to co-plan and fund ongoing experimental projects in an

attempt to reduce the degradation of fish habitat and water quality by freshwater aquaculture operations.

Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the lead agency for aquaculture, wants to ensure that Canada's aquaculture industry continues to grow. In its Aquaculture Policy Framework of 2002, and its "Strategic Plan: Our Waters, Our Future, 2005-2010," it announced that it intends to tap into Canada's "enormous potential to be a world aquaculture leader based upon the strength of its extensive coastal and freshwater resources." It aims to remove the "cumbersome regulatory framework and trade barriers that keep Canada from realizing its potential."

The market demand for Salmonid species, which includes Rainbow Trout farmed in Georgian Bay, is growing exponentially. DFO has yet to make distinctions between freshwater and marine aquaculture. They are drafting a detailed plan for the development of aquaculture across Canada over the next decade.

It is well established that there are serious water pollution concerns related to aquaculture. Chemical contamination concerns revolve primarily around the issue of eutrophication, which refers to the nutrient enrichment of natural waters. As nutrient levels increase (primarily phosphorus), plankton blooms occur, water clarity is reduced, dissolved oxygen levels are reduced, and coldwater fish

species are eliminated. Moreover due to eutrophication, exotic species like zebra mussels and round gobies are altering food webs. As a result, natural systems are being stressed and native species, like diapaeria, have declined or are threatened

For many First Nations, protection of native fisheries and the natural ecosystems upon which these fisheries depend is the highest priority. The Pike is an example. As a top predator it is critical to the health of the ecosystem and is highly valued as a recreational resource. For First Nations peoples it has essential social and cultural value that introduced species such as rainbow trout do not possess. Populations of native sportfish have been in decline for many years. This crisis has been recognized by the public and MNR. People living in First Nation communities are greatly concerned about the negative impact cage culture operations may have on species such as Lake Trout, Pike, Walleye and Muskie, given that escapees compete for food and for habitat with native species.

Aquaculture operations are currently up and running in the North Channel or Lake Huron, in the Sudbury basin, and in the Timmins area.

Written by Naveen Ahuja, with excerpts from an article by Claudette Pintwala, Member Georgian Bay Association.

Rio Algom and Denison Award Contract to SGS Lakefield; Elliot Lake Field Research Station Threatened

Rio Algom, a subsidiary of BHP-Billiton, and Denison Mines Limited have awarded a contract for laboratory analytical work to monitor their 14 decommissioned uranium mines and 130 million tonnes of residual radioactive tailings in the Serpent River basin area to a large commercial laboratory in Peterborough, Ontario.

This move is likely to force a closure of the Elliot Lake Field Research Station (ELFRS) that was set up in 1996 by a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure that the local community was involved in monitoring the environmental effects of the closed mines.

ELFRS grew out of a federal EA panel recommendation in 1993 that said "The

tailings of the Elliot Lake uranium mines present a perpetual environmental hazard - community involvement is a fundamental part of the perpetual care system".

In 2001, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Denison Mines, Denison Environmental Services (DES), was awarded a five year contract to provide comprehensive services to monitor, treat and report on the closed uranium properties of Rio Algom on behalf of Rio Algom parent BHP-Billiton. DES already provides these services for Denison. Until now, DES samples have been analyzed by ELFRS in the community of Elliot Lake.

The mining companies had set up a

competitive bidding process to determine the award of the laboratory services contract. The tender pitted the small community-based - but accredited - lab, against large commercial laboratories outside the region.

The ELFRS bid was for a total amount of \$135,000/year. Assuming the bid from SGS Lakefield was 10-15% less, the savings to the companies would be in the order of \$20,000/year. The cost difference is equal to about 15 cents per thousand tonnes of tailings being monitored. Although ELFRS undertakes work for other clients, it is unlikely it can survive without the mining company funds.