

Nuking Ontario: Public "Consultations" to Begin on Expanded Nuclear Production

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PEJ News - C. L. Cook - While half a world away Iran faces the wrath of America and her allies over its nuclear program, Ontarians are to be granted a scant four days of "public consultation" on the province's plan to expand nuclear power production on the shores of Lake Ontario.

http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/image_full/international/photosvideos/photos/action-at-the-nuclear-power-pl

www.PEJ.org

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C. L. Cook

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Ontario is the engine of the Canadian economy, and that engine runs on electricity. In southern Ontario, where demand continues to grow, the Ontario Power Authority, the crown corporation responsible for energy, is [proposing a 40 billion dollar expansion](#) to the province's atomic energy infrastructure. This in addition to the 4.24 billion dollar refurbishing mega-project at the Bruce nuclear station on Lake Huron.

Critics of the plan say the province should be moving away from coal and nuclear, spending their money instead on renewables, such as wind, solar, biomass, and targeted efficiency and conservation incentives to homes and businesses. They claim the public consultation process, planned later this month is too brief to be meaningful, saying it amounts to little more than a "whitewash" for the controversial program.

Answering the critic's call, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty said; "In an ideal world, we could get to where we need to go through conservation and renewables like wind. But, we don't live in that world, we live in this one." Far from ideal, of the approximately 1.2 billion dollars in new energy projects the province announced last year, only 13 percent of those are aimed at efficiency and conservation.

Lamenting Ontario's short-sighted approach, Mark Winfield of the University of Toronto environmental studies department says; "There isn't that much happening. The government talks about conservation and renewable sources, but if you follow the money, it's clear where it's putting the dollars. They're low-balling the efficiency potential [and] largely preparing to rebuild the system we already have."

Winfield recently completed an analysis of Ontario's energy profile for the Calgary-based Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development. He acknowledges McGuinty's administration

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has made some progress: Announcing last week it would buy power from homeowners generated by solar panels; committing to an energy conservation ad campaign; sales tax rebates for high efficiency appliances; and the introduction of "smart meters," a system that charges less for off-peak hour usage. But, he believes the government moves have been too timid, suggesting it remains unconvinced these measures will be enough to keep the Ontario economy performing at current levels.

Winfield's report calls for aggressive conservation measures that he says could provide Ontario with all the electricity it needs without the use of either coal, or nuclear plants, at about half the cost of the Power Authority's proposed plan for Ontario. And this without the risk of meltdowns, toxic spills, or the [thorny issue of nuclear waste disposal](#) .

Says Winfield; "It's possible to reduce projected demand by more than 40 percent by 2020, using proven technologies that are commercially available today."

Energy consultant, Ralph Torrie thinks what's needed is a visionary approach by government, similar to the building of the Canadian Pacific railroad in the 19th century. Torrie says; ""If you said, `We're going to do this as a government. We'll put efficiency in place,' you could achieve success rates that would blow all other experience out of the water. We haven't made the commitment."

Jack Gibbons, speaking for the Ontario Clean Air Alliance says the power authority's figures depend on nuclear plants being built on budget and on schedule, something that's never happened in Ontario's experience with nuclear power. Gibbons says; "[the authority] is counting on nuclear plants being built under budget, and operating flawlessly, two things that have never happened in Ontario,"

Of the Bruce refurbishing, U. of T.'s Mark Winfield says it's the perfect example of the flaws in nuclear power. "The Bruce project is a poster child for the fact that the nuclear industry can't compete on a level playing field, it needs extraordinary guarantees."

Public hearings on the province's so-called 'Supply Mix Advice Report,' issued in December, and recommending a 70 billion dollar cash outlay over the next twenty years, will be held across the province between February 13-17.

Chris Cook is a contributing editor to [PEJ News](#) and hosts [Gorilla Radio](#) , a weekly public affairs program, broad/webcast from the University of Victoria. You can check out the [GR Blog here](#)