

700 Lawrence Ave. W., Suite 310
Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B4

Tel: (416) 367-3313
1-800-267-6817 (Ont)
Fax: (416) 367-2844
E-mail: info@opha.on.ca
www.opha.on.ca

Honorary Patron

The Hon. James K. Bartleman
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

President

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
E-mail: gaslanyan@opha.on.ca

Interim Executive Director

Connie Uetrecht
E-mail: cuetrecht@opha.on.ca

Constituent Societies

ANDSOOHA – Public Health Nursing
Management in Ontario

Association of Ontario
Health Centres

Association of Public Health
Epidemiologists in Ontario

Association of Supervisors of Public
Health Inspectors of Ontario

Canadian Institute of Public Health
Inspectors (Ontario Branch)

Community Health Nurses' Initiatives
Group (RNAO)

Health Promotion Ontario:
Public Health

Ontario Association of Public Health
Dentistry

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals
in Public Health

Public Health Research, Education and
Development (PHRED) Program

Charitable Registration
Number 11924 8771 RR0001

September 25, 2006

Hon. Dwight Duncan
Minister of Energy
Hearst Block, 4th Floor,
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2E1

Dear Minister Duncan,

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) to express our concern about the Province of Ontario's electricity supply mix plan recommendations. The OPHA is a volunteer, non-profit organization that does research, education and advocacy on issues related to community and public health throughout Ontario. The OPHA has been very active on environmental health issues in recent years thanks to the dedication of its Environmental Health Work Group. The majority of active members in this Work Group work full-time on environmental health issues for public health units in Ontario.

In November 2001, the OPHA published "Beyond Coal: Power, Public Health and the Environment"¹, in which we called on the Province to phase out coal-fired power plants because of the significant health and environmental impacts associated with the use of coal. We applauded the Government of Ontario when the closure of the coal-fired plants was announced and are now very disappointed by the Province's decision to delay the phase-out without a target date in sight.

In the "Beyond Coal" report, we also indicated that the phase-out of coal should not be accomplished with an increased reliance on nuclear plants. Nuclear energy is extremely expensive and highly subsidized. It presents significant health and environmental concerns for those involved in the mining and processing of uranium and for the long-term storage of the waste. The radioactive waste must be stored securely and the costs involved for thousands of years of secure nuclear waste storage are not factored into the cost of generating nuclear power.

¹ Beyond Coal: Power, Public Health and the Environment is available at <http://www.opha.on.ca/resources/coal.pdf>

As the coal-fired plants are retired and the existing nuclear facilities reach the end of their expected lifecycle, we ask the Province to invest heavily in conservation and demand management programs and in renewable forms of energy generation. Wind, solar, small-scale hydro, and biomass generally exert less pressure than fossil fuels in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and air emissions, which have serious public health impacts. Many of these technologies were once considered prohibitively expensive but costs have decreased remarkably in recent years.

Most of the feasible wind, biomass and small hydroelectric resources are located in rural and northern Ontario, necessitating significant investments in upgrading and expanding the transmission network.

No form of electrical generation is entirely free of health and environmental effects, but there are clear contrasts in the type and magnitude of the potential health burdens. Health considerations favour a significant investment in conservation and demand management and a substantial increase in generation from renewable sources.

Yours truly,

Dr. Garry Aslanyan
President, Ontario Public Health Association

cc: Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier, Province of Ontario
Hon. George Smitherman, Deputy Premier and Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
Dr. Sheela Basrur, Chief Medical Officer of Health