



July 15, 2005

EDITORIAL: The lights are on, but ...

Here are some simple questions about Ontario's energy policy we would like answered by Premier Dalton McGuinty and/or Energy Minister Dwight Duncan.

(a) Why is the Ontario government reducing our capacity to produce electricity at the very time we don't have enough energy to meet present demands, let alone future ones?

(b) Why are we closing coal-fired generating stations in Ontario and then buying more expensive power from coal-fired generating stations in the United States?

(c) What, other than driving energy prices through the roof, is the government's realistic plan for energy conservation?

(d) What happened to nuclear energy?

(e) If, as Hydro One says, it can operate, apparently indefinitely, without 1,000 striking engineers and other workers -- which we doubt -- what do they do when they're working?

Just to save time, we aren't discounting government efforts promoting conservation. (Readers who want information on simple conservation strategies can visit the government website at www.energy.gov.on.ca or call 1-888-668-4636 and order the brochures: "Tips to help you conserve energy and save money", and, for small businesses, "Conservation through design.")

But even with the best efforts of individual consumers and small power users, the real problem, it seems to us, is that we have a provincial government whose energy policy, in order to fulfill a stupid election promise that should never have been made, is basically to keep closing down Ontario's coal-fired generating plants until 2007, thus further reducing capacity.

Except, that is, for the biggest station of all, Nanticoke, which, the government now says it won't close until 2009.

The point is that whenever Nanticoke closes, it's going to place a huge strain on our already inadequate generating capacity.

Given that, as far as we know, the Almighty isn't planning on creating any more Niagara Falls in the next few years, and given that wind and solar power are still in their infancy stage as major power generators, we'd like to know what our government's long-term plan is to fix this mess that, to be fair, it inherited from past Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments.

It sounds to us as if the only realistic option is for increased nuclear capacity -- properly run and maintained this time.

But if we're wrong, tell us why. But first explain why we're closing down coal-fired stations here and then buying pricier power from coal-fired stations in the U.S. And please tell us that your energy policy isn't as dumb as Toronto's garbage policy.

You know, the one where Mayor David Miller and his council preach "saving the environment" while shipping our trash to Michigan, ruling out other viable options such as incineration, and then using pie-in-the-sky conservation projections so that the whole mess looks like a real plan, when it isn't.

Please tell us that your energy policy isn't that dumb. Please.