

Ontario, don't be seduced by wind's breezy glamour

Province should seek an objective appraisal of wind turbines' generating potential

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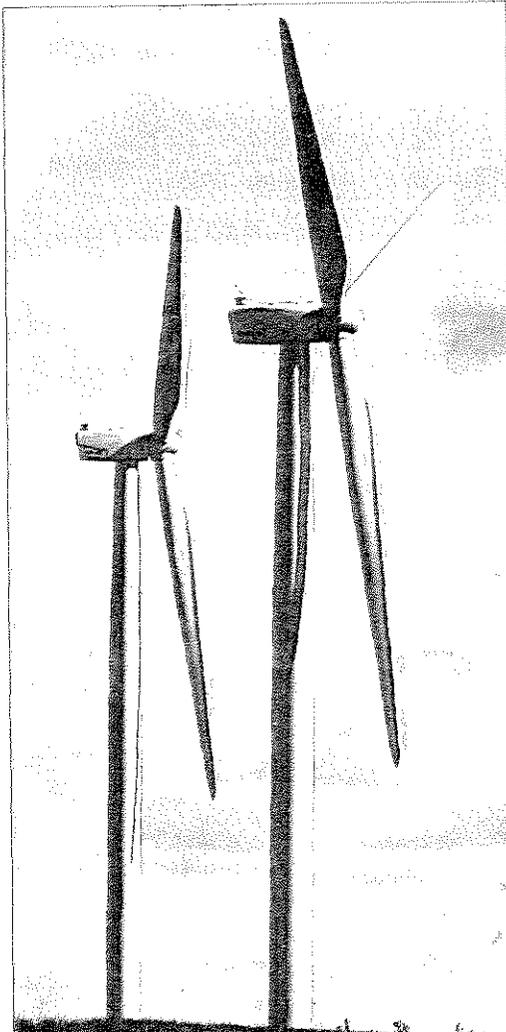
I am not anti-green. We do need to invest in technologies that reduce our reliance on fossil fuels that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

But I believe we must do so with intelligence and not be seduced by vague or reckless promises that clearly do not stand up to scrutiny. Nor should we proceed with enormous public expenditures without appropriate due diligence and reasonable care, especially when it comes to the health and welfare of our fellow citizens and the future of our children.

I chose to live in a rural area that was once one of the scenic treasures of Ontario and that is now being populated by wind turbines. According to the premier of our province, I am a NIMBY. But NIMBY talk comes cheap from those who will never live anywhere near these incessantly noisy, 35-story behemoths that cause documented health and environmental risks as well as dramatically lowering property values and impacting one's quality of life. And all for what purpose when we have alternative approaches that are proven to be less costly and vastly more effective?

While the intent is understandable, the Green Energy Act is seriously flawed — particularly in those aspects pertaining to wind energy and lack of due process.

If the provincial government of the day is so certain that the risks are negligible, then why does the act not contain protections such as indemnifying property owners for losses incurred or those who will



the advice of the wind industry, many of its claims parrot the views. The Advertising Standards Authority in the U.K. recent forced the industry to cut by half a false claim regarding the amount harmful carbon dioxide emissions that would be eliminated by using wind turbines.

Isn't it time we insisted on an objective, scientific examination of the facts rather than simply accepting the industry lobbyists' assertions at face value?

The government advises that wind power will cost us 13.5 cents per kilowatt-hour (more than twice current electricity costs) but has yet to publicly identify all the additional costs. Its enthusiasm for green is countered by its silence how this flawed policy — one that relies so heavily on unpredictable, heavily subsidized, premium priced wind energy — will require backup from even more publicly funded, standby generation facilities.

As the European experience confirms, this will inevitably lead to a staggering increase in energy costs with consequent detrimental effects on business and employment. From this perspective, the promise of 55,000 new jobs from green energy is a cruel delusion.

The people most negatively affected by this act are rural residents, taking planning responsibility away from local municipalities and leaving key decisions to subsequent ministerial regulations. The new decision-making regime gives them no say in matters that will dramatically affect their lives. Rural residents are not a major contributor to Ontario's carbon footprint but are being conscripted as a major part of its solution.

There is a simple solution to impact on rural residents. Ensure that setbacks from residences conform to international standards endorsed by renowned medical scientific bodies that have developed

quences?

Wouldn't a prudent government undertake independent epidemiological and environmental studies prior to giving developers huge financial incentives to go down a path that is largely irreversible? Proceeding without such knowledge, while other pressing social priorities take a back seat, is a classic example of "Fire. Ready. Aim."

Let's examine some of the facts. Is wind power really a viable economical alternative to other renewable energy options? The European experience is instructive. Denmark, the world's most wind-intensive nation with more than 6,000 turbines generating 19 per cent of its electricity, has yet to close a single fossil-fuel power plant. It requires 50 per cent more coal-generated electricity to cover wind's failings; pollution and carbon dioxide emissions have risen (by 36 per cent in 2006 alone); and its electricity generation costs are the highest in Europe (15 cents per kilowatt-

hour compared to Ontario's current rate of about 6 cents).

The Danish Federation of Industries says: "Windmills are a mistake and economically make no sense." The head of Denmark's largest energy utility tells us that "wind turbines do not reduce carbon dioxide emissions." The chair of energy policy in the Danish parliament calls it "a terribly expensive disaster."

The German experience is no different. *Der Spiegel* reports that "Germany's CO2 emissions haven't been reduced by even a single gram" and additional coal- and gas-fired plants have been constructed to ensure reliable delivery. These

people do not seem like NIMBYs nor does this sound like a green Utopia.

Given these circumstances, *The Wall Street Journal* advises that "wind is more a nuisance than a source of power" and that "wind generation is the prime example of what can go wrong when the government decides to pick winners. The idea that it can replace coal or natural gas in electrical generation is a fantasy." Worldwide, wind energy contributes less than 1 per cent to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

I am disappointed that our government seems so willing to accept

examined the health and environmental risks. The French Academy of Medicine recommends 1.1 metres, pending further research on health effects of persistent noise to low intensity noise.

Alternatively, the government could concentrate wind farms in more remote areas, as has been done in Quebec and much more. But that would likely mean more and this government is bent on sacrificing the welfare of rural residents rather than incurring more expense.

I have spent my professional life committed to the principle of reasoned and informed debate that serves the public interest. It costs us all dearly that the present government evinces so little commitment to the same principle. Tomorrow, prominent American environmentalist Bill McKibben says the threat of global warming is so great that renewal energy projects must go forward quickly despite the possibility of negative local impacts.

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IAN WALDIE/GETTY IMAGES

Cut taxes, trim waste to spur growth

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Thursday will be an important day for Ontario.

It's the day struggling Ontario families, businesses and seniors have been waiting for.

It's the day the province's annual provincial budget is unveiled.

This budget is more important than any other in recent history.

In these turbulent times, Ontarians deserve a plan from their government. They need to know how Dalton McGuinty and his government plan to bring us through to the other side of this economic storm while still maintaining the services people depend on.

Ontarians expect government to protect them — to protect their jobs, their businesses and their futures.

Over the past six years, we haven't seen much in the way of an economic plan from this Liberal government. With revenues up by \$27 billion, McGuinty and his government have recklessly spent without saving for a rainy day.

Since taking office in 2003, they have increased program spending by 50 per cent. Total program spending increased by an average of 8 per cent each year, while Ontario's economy grew only by 4 per cent annually. In other words, this government spent twice as much as it took in.

This year, Ontario's spending will skyrocket past \$100 billion, while at the same time the province is facing an increasing debt load. Ontario is expected to run a massive \$18 billion deficit over the next two years. This is in addition to already carrying a total debt burden of more than \$170 billion. It represents a debt load of \$13,000 for every man, woman and child in Ontario and is a burden that is clearly going to worsen this Thursday.

While McGuinty continues to tell Ontarians this is the approach needed to "stimulate" our economy, we know differently.

Ontario is not better off today as a result of this tax-and-spend approach.

The province has lost almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. We

now trail other provinces in economic growth. Ontario's unemployment rate is the highest it has been in 12 years and as of next week, we are officially a have-not province.

Now more than ever, Ontario needs a comprehensive, detailed economic plan.

We need a plan that will help regain our competitive advantage, return us to prosperity and balanced budgets. A plan that instills hope that we can overcome the challenges we're facing and restore Ontario's status as the economic engine of Canada.

As the Official Opposition, Ontario's Progressive Conservatives have called on McGuinty and his minister of finance to lower corporate income taxes, to immediately eliminate the capital tax and to unlock pensions for struggling seniors. We've asked that the government provide transparency and accountability when it comes to spending by establishing an online registry of all ongoing infrastructure projects.

We've urged the government to

implement a three-month PST holiday on the sale of cars and trucks in Ontario. Most recently, we called for the adoption of a "Retire-Ride" incentive program that would see Ontario drivers receive \$2,000 towards the purchase of a new car in exchange for any vehicle 10 years or older.

These are by no means cure-all solutions. However, they are a start.

They are measures that could easily be included in this week's budget. Measures we hope to see included as proof of the government's willingness to finally listen and operate with the opposition most importantly, to put Ontario first.

This Thursday, we will be looking to this budget as an opportunity for McGuinty to finally show the leadership our province so desperately needs.

We'll be looking for the government to deliver a real plan — a plan that will protect jobs, public services and the future of this great province.

Anything less is unacceptable.