



Canadian Federation of University Women - Ottawa
Fédération Canadienne des Femmes Diplômées des Universités - Ottawa
P.O. Box 5647, Station F, Ottawa ON K2C 3M1

Hon. Dalton McGuinty, MPP for Ottawa South
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

March 17, 2010

Re: Proposed Gas-Fired Power Plant in Oakville

Dear Mr. McGuinty:

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) - Ottawa notes that the Government of Ontario has approved the construction of a 900 megawatt gas-fired power plant in Oakville. We understand that this project will help Ontario meet its requirements for electrical power while reducing its dependence on coal-fired power plants, thereby reducing airborne environmental toxins that threaten the health of Ontarians and the environment.

However, the plant is to be located in a densely-populated area, less than 350 meters from homes and schools, close to a railway line and major highway. Residents fear that plant emissions will pose additional health risks in an area where air quality is already poor. They call for a thorough and transparent environmental and risk assessment to ensure that the plant site is located at a safe distance from vulnerable populations.

Oakville residents, MPPs, and environmental and health groups, including Citizens for Clean Air (C4CA), vigorously oppose this project. They have concerns about the selection criteria and provincial approval process, including environmental assessments. They note the proposed plant's location in a heavily-populated area; recent reports of a lethal explosion in a similar plant in Connecticut; and the potential for serious effects of an explosion on neighboring residential areas, railway lines, and major highways. There are also concerns about the effect of resultant airborne pollutants, especially particulate matter (PM) 2.5 microns in diameter, on the health of area residents; vapour cloud formation resulting in periods of fog and icing; and, the reduced quality of Lake Ontario water resulting from the plant's water cooling process.

In view of the controversy surrounding the approval of this plant, and of Ontario's commitment to reduce dependence on coal-fired plants to produce electrical energy, we have a number of questions:

1. Has the Ontario government sufficiently weighed the risks of the construction of new power plants in heavily-populated areas such as the Oakville site?
2. Will the Ontario government ensure that this and related projects are subjected to complete and thorough environmental, health and safety risk assessments that meet international standards before approving construction?
3. Will safety and health risk assessments include the risk factors that combined to cause the recent Connecticut lethal incident? How will these risks be addressed?
4. The Ozone Annex to the Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement established a cap on emissions of ozone precursors. How will the Oakville project affect this commitment? What is the U.S. reaction to potential emissions?
5. Does this project employ the most effective low-emission combustion technology? What alternative sites/technologies have been considered and what are the costs/benefits of these alternatives?

6. Where will the gas supply come from? What is the assurance that the supply and its cost will be stable enough to ensure that the plant continues to operate within the design parameters and in compliance with the negotiated contract conditions?

7. What is the schedule to shut down Ontario's coal-fired plants? Where are the operational coal-fired plants currently located? By what other means are the power requirements currently being delivered? What alternatives other than (or in addition to) gas-fired power plants are planned to ensure adequate power in Ontario after all of the coal-fired plants are shut down?

8. Does the Ontario Building Code or equivalent prescribe the setback of existing power plants from residential areas? At what distance should they be located to minimize polluting effects on populations while efficiently meeting requirements for supplying power?

9. How does the Ministry of the Environment assess the completeness and appropriateness of environmental and risk assessment and financial business case information before approving the location and construction of major projects such as power plants? Is there an appeal process against environmental assessments?

10. What mechanisms are in place to ensure full information and transparency for this and similar projects?

Plans for beginning construction of the Oakville plant are already underway. Please urge the Government of Ontario to make a substantial and significant commitment towards the reduction of toxic emissions, the provision of complete, thorough and transparent environmental and risk assessments before approval of power plant construction, and setback provisions that are adequate to ensure safety of populated areas. Your support is urgently needed.

Founded in 1919, CFUW is a voluntary, self-funded, non-partisan organization of women graduates, associates and students in 112 clubs across Canada, 59 of which are in Ontario. It is the largest of 79 national affiliates of the International Federation of University Women. A member Club of CFUW, CFUW-Ottawa has over 500 members in the Ottawa-Gatineau area. CFUW Clubs work to improve the status of women and girls and to promote education, peace, social justice and human rights. We monitor and advocate on local, provincial, national and international public policy issues and promote awareness of our policies. CFUW has national policy which promotes the protection of human health by reducing environmental toxins, on pollution reduction and responsible environmental management (See *The Policy Book* at www.cfuw.org/policy-book-online.aspx). We believe that citizen dialogue with government can lead to positive change.

We look forward to your response. If you wish to discuss this issue, please contact me at leila.metcalf@sympatico.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Leila Metcalf, Ed. D.
President, CFUW - Ottawa