

Hon. Brad Duguid, Minister
Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure
4th Floor, Hearst Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2E1

Mike Schreiner, Leader
Green Party of Ontario
191 John Street, lower level
Toronto, ON M5T 1X3

An open letter to Brad Duguid, the Hon. Minister of Energy and Infrastructure

Dear Minister Duguid:

I am writing you to share my concerns over your government's plans for the development of gas fired power plants in Ontario. While I can commend your government's recent attention to the virtues of green energy, and what it could mean to Ontario residents, it would appear that your definition of green and mine are not the same.

Gathering today, on the front steps of Queen's Park, are residents from Oakville and York Region – specifically, the Holland Marsh. Their participation today shows they question your definition of green energy as well. Why, in an era when most people in our province want to go green and want to live in a healthier environment, do the legitimate concerns of these residents get dismissed by your government and labeled as NIMBYism? Why is the response from your government merely a shrug?

These residents are gathered because of their concerns over the health and well-being of their communities. I think you would agree that it is the role of government to promote the health and well-being of those citizens who elected you as their representatives. You were duly elected to listen to your constituents and as the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, these Ontarians at the doorsteps of Queen's Park are also your constituents.

The gas fired plants as proposed pose a threat to our fellow citizens' health and well-being. Just a month ago, such a facility destroyed a peaceful Connecticut neighbourhood, killing six workers, injuring scores of others, with shockwaves felt 50 kilometres away – and all they were doing was testing the operational capabilities of the yet-unfinished gas plant.

In Oakville, the company selected to build that plant intends to build its facility within a brief radius of a hospital, 16 schools, more than 11,000 homes, child care and early learning facilities, seniors' complexes, and one of the major transportation arteries into the City of Toronto.

In the Holland Marsh, at a time when Ontarians are concerned about their food security and want to eat local, Ontario produce, another company is proposing the construction of a natural gas-fired power plant on some of the most productive farm land in Canada. This location is on a floodplain, less than 200 metres from a primary school and church, and is again, far too close to one of the oldest settlements in the area.

Aside from the remote possibility of catastrophe, the far more serious concern for these residents and communities remains the legitimate threats to both local health and economic outcomes. In Oakville, the new facility would further weaken air quality in the Clarkson air shed, already identified by the Ministry of the Environment and Minister John Gerretsen as an area of concern. The distribution over a wide area of the high particulate matter would see a reduction in the life expectancy of residents brave enough to stay

there. In the Holland Marsh, there is no way of assessing the potential damage to the area because all of the environmental assessments have been conducted without any real regard for the ultimate impact. In fact, given the unique micro-climate, the unique soil, and the myriad of legislation “protecting” this area – brought in by your government – the Green Party of Ontario is genuinely shocked that these projects could take place at this precise moment in time.

Quite simply, residents’ concerns cannot be chalked up to NIMBYism. They, like us, are legitimately concerned by your government’s contradictory stance, especially at a time when power consumption is falling and conservation efforts are climbing.

The Green Party of Ontario has been vocal in our support of these residents. We believe there is a better way forward. The Green Party of Ontario believes that an aggressive plan to increase energy efficiency through demand management programs is the most financially responsible approach to planning for our power needs. We think that more work needs to be completed on transmission issues, like building a smart grid, that could support distributed generation to keep the lights on across the province.

At a time when this government is dealing with a massive deficit, I would think you would agree that it makes sense to use our resources wisely. I am concerned that the companies that own these plants stand to reap enormous financial benefits regardless of energy demand. Currently, in a similar deal in Quebec, taxpayers are losing between \$130 and \$140 million dollars annually while a plant sits idle.

There are better solutions to our problems and it will require a co-operative, forward-thinking approach. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss fiscally responsible policies to promote energy efficiency and green energy development in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Mike Schreiner
Leader, Green Party of Ontario