

Government should get on with new plants

Eganville Leader

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Report from Queen's Park

I spent the weekend of February 17th to 19th at our party's policy conference in Niagara Falls. By all accounts the conference was a huge success, attended by over 1,000 people from all across Ontario. The conference marked the mid point in the party's policy development process leading up to the next election, and focused on listening and reaching out to all Ontarians.

You may recall, I hosted a number of local policy development meetings last summer and the input we received from those sessions was included in the formation of six white papers on Prosperity, Energy, Health Care, Children and Strong Rural and Strong Northern Communities. There will be more white papers released later this year. There was real excitement in the air as real people discussed real ideas about the issues that matter most to them. The grassroots input collected will go a long way in building "Ontario's New Foundation," our platform for 2007.

One thing was made very clear by our leader, John Tory. Unlike the McGuinty Liberals, we will not make any promises that we cannot keep. I'm looking forward to the continuance of this process, so that when the time comes we offer the people a clear choice. If we want to re-engage people in the democratic process, we must ensure that they feel relevant to the decisions made by government.

Last Thursday, February 23rd, I was able to attend the Canadian Nuclear Association's Annual Seminar in Ottawa. What a terrific opportunity to listen to some real high powered people (no pun intended) in the energy sector as well as being treated to addresses from the United States Ambassador, The Honourable David Wilkins and His Excellency, Ambassador Lu Shumin of China. All speakers were very informative and interesting.

I must say, the highlight was a lunchtime address delivered by Dr. Patrick Moore. His presentation was one of the best I have ever heard making the case for nuclear power to lead the way in ensuring a secure supply of electricity as we approach the crunch of the next 20 years. He went on to indicate that while he supports the use of renewables wherever practical, that we will never be in a position to satisfy the needs of Ontario using renewables alone. If our goal is to reduce emissions as a result of producing electricity, we must get on with the refurbishment of our nuclear fleet.

Dr. Moore spoke of the absolutely sparkling record of the nuclear industry when it comes to safety. There is no industry that is scrutinized like nuclear. There has never been a single death in North America, as a direct result of nuclear accident. Not one. While those

who oppose nuclear have always raised the specter of its danger, they simply haven't got a leg to stand on. What makes Dr. Moore's strong support of nuclear power so remarkable is that he was the co-founder of Green Peace and one of the world's most ardent anti-nuclear activists. He's been on both sides and backs nuclear 100%.

I have spent a lot of time talking about clean coal technology lately because I have to point out how this government's energy policy has failed. As a result I have said less about nuclear. Let me take this opportunity to again state my position.

I, like Dr. Moore, support nuclear as the provider of our base load power here in Ontario. I believe the government should get on with the approval process for new-build nuclear. The improvements in nuclear technology over the years (Pickering is 35 years old) make me very comfortable in saying we can bring these projects in on time and on budget. The record of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) world wide is a testament to this fact. Because of the lengthy approval process required, the decision must be made soon if we are to have new facilities on line before some current ones are taken out of service. The responsibility of supplying safe, affordable, reliable energy to Ontarians is a challenge. I continue to maintain that we need a realistic mix including renewables wherever practical. When it comes to base load power, nuclear running 24/7 has been our work-horse. It should continue to be.