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August 24, 2005

The Honourable Dwight Duncan
Minister of Energy
900 Bay Street, 4th Floor
Hearst Block
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2E1

Subject: Recommendations on Ontario's Future Energy Supply Mix

Dear Minister Duncan:

I am pleased to provide recommendations on the future energy supply mix for Ontario. These comments are offered in response to the Ontario Power Authority's call for written submissions, and in light of the transformations taking place in Ontario's energy sector.

Toronto Public Health's most recent assessment indicates that poor air quality contributes to approximately 1,700 premature deaths and 6,000 hospitalizations each year in Toronto. I am encouraged by the Government of Ontario's efforts to reduce this health burden by phasing out coal-fired electricity generation in the province. However, the next steps are critical in determining whether Ontario's energy future will help protect health or continue to create health risks.

Future Energy Supply Mix:

Developing Ontario's energy strategy is an opportunity to make healthy, sustainable choices that will benefit Ontarians over the long term. From a health risk-reduction perspective, I urge the Government of Ontario to give clear priority to reducing demand through energy conservation and providing energy from low-impact, renewable sources, rather than nuclear energy. This approach, combined with cleaner-burning natural gas as an interim measure, can be used to balance energy supply and demand in Ontario.

A truly innovative energy conservation strategy can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and improve environmental quality, reducing overall health risks.

Energy Conservation:

To date, the Government of Ontario has committed to reducing Ontario's peak energy demand by five percent by 2007. According to a 2004 study by the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Ontario is capable of reducing energy demand by 40 percent by the year 2020, relative

to the business as usual case. This would be achieved by a combination of financial incentives, financing approaches, and reduced impediments to cogeneration. Reducing energy demand lowers fossil fuel consumption and helps to clean our air. I recommend that the Government of Ontario commit to achieving ambitious reductions in energy demand by 2020, by pursuing these innovative approaches to conservation. Also, I urge the Government of Ontario to empower Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer to immediately develop and implement a far-reaching conservation plan for Ontario to achieve this goal.

Renewable Energy:

The Government of Ontario has committed to a renewable portfolio standard ensuring that five percent (1,350 MW) of Ontario's energy comes from new renewable sources by 2007, and ten percent (2,700 MW) by 2010. According to the Pembina Institute and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (2004), Ontario is capable of producing more than 55 percent of its energy supply from renewable sources by 2020, if implemented in concert with the aggressive energy conservation measures outlined above. Renewable energy sources, in combination with net metering and other complementary approaches, offer long-term air quality and health benefits over conventional sources of energy. I challenge the Government of Ontario to follow-up its commitment to phase out coal by achieving aggressive targets for low-impact, renewable sources of energy by 2020.

To help lower the short- and long-term health risks associated with the energy we use, I urge the Government of Ontario to emphasize energy conservation and renewable energy sources in its approach to Ontario's energy supply, as described above.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

David McKeown, MDCM, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

cc: Donna Cansfield, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Energy
Mr. Jan Carr, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Power Authority
Peter Love, Chief Energy Conservation Officer, Ontario Power Authority
Councillor John Filion, Chair, Board of Health, City of Toronto