



Boosting big dirty nuclear: proven recipe for big time financial loss

A Road Not Taken

The Ford government claims that nuclear-generated electricity provides the safest, greenest and most affordable answer to Ontario's energy needs.

However, refurbishing nuclear plants is the most expensive option available to Ontario. Indeed, Ontario's decades-long nuclear program has been consistently and unarguably fraught with cost overruns and delays.

We need an off-ramp leading to affordable, renewable energy future. Instead, Doug Ford intends to keep steering Ontario on the nuclear superhighway. It's a road riddled with financial and environmental risks.

In 2017, just before Ford took office, the United Nations Environment Program reported¹ that more money was being invested in solar power than in coal, gas and nuclear combined. According to Ontario's own Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) a large renewable procurement project would significantly increase the cost-efficient output of installed wind, solar and hydro energy.

Some sixty per cent of Ontario's electricity² is generated from nuclear power, followed by hydropower at

around twenty-five per cent, wind at seven per cent and natural gas at three per cent.

Astonishingly, right after the 2018 election, the Ford government actually *cancelled* 758 renewable energy projects and the province's cap-and-trade program, throwing away \$231 million. It rebuffed an offer from Quebec to provide it with a long-term supply of cheap hydroelectric power. It made a bet on more climate breakdown, putting our money down on carbon generating gas-fired power generation.

The Ford government intends to sink \$26 billion into the refurbishment of the Darlington (originally \$12 billion over budget and ten years late) and Bruce nuclear stations. It also plans to extend the life of the aging Pickering Nuclear Station. With the Ontario nuclear programme's unquestioned record of cost overruns, there is every reason to believe that the cost of the refurbishment efforts will grow significantly.

A Costly Path

The history of Ontario's investment in an unwieldy nuclear fleet is full of cost over-runs and failures to deliver on promised capacity. The planned multi-billion-dollar investments will increase the large part of the provincial debt that ballooned from \$12 billion to \$38

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikescott/2018/04/09/solar-power-investment-outstripped-coal-gas-and-nuclear-combined-in-2017/?sh=2d0ec5161237>

² <https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles-ontario.html>



billion from the seventies and eighties, largely due to the high costs of building and maintaining nuclear plants, not to mention their accompanying debt servicing costs.

The failure to invest in solar, wind and hydro power, combined with the continued investment in nuclear and gas-fired plants will lead to significant increases in Ontario's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The Climate First Alternative

It's imperative that Ontario invest in solar, wind and hydropower – these renewables are the safest and most economic



sources of energy available to Ontario.

We also need to get away from the centralized “hub-and-spoke” power generation system to emphasize “distributed” or decentralized generation. That means renewables. Meanwhile, let's tell the truth about the long, costly history of Ontario's hulking nuclear fleet.

Ontario must restore the government arms-length monitoring agencies that will report regularly on what government promises and what it delivers.

Meanwhile, invest in “demand side management” that offers incentives

to job-rich conservation efforts, by definition decentralized and climate-friendly.

Sources:

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