



THE FORD GOVERNMENT

CLIMATE CRIME # 8 UPDATE JAN 2023

Gas: Ontario's new coal

A few months after taking office in 2018, the Doug Ford government appointed an investment banker and former Harper finance minister to head up the Ontario Independent Electrical Systems Operator (IESO).

As early as 2013 Joe Oliver was claiming, without evidence, that scientists said, “our fears (on climate change) are exaggerated.”¹ After Harper’s defeat, Oliver wrote in the Toronto Sun that efforts to cut fossil fuels use as a means to reduce climate breakdown impacts are rooted in beliefs that are “grossly exaggerated or simply false.”² Greenpeace climate campaigner Keith Stewart said that appointing a climate denier to the IESO just as Ontario’s electricity system needs to shift to a low-carbon future is “like appointing an alchemist to oversee drug approvals.”³

With Oliver as the IESO chair, the Ford government is boosting emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) to produce Ontario’s electricity. Ford wants to increase use of natural gas-fired power plants to replace Ontario’s aging nuclear power plants while meeting anticipated growth in demand for electricity. He spent \$2.8 billion to

purchase three gas-fired plants in 2020⁴ and in October 2022 he approved building new plants that could operate for 20 years or more.⁵ His plan will continue the export of electricity produced from natural gas. In 2019 this was about 35 per cent of total output.⁶

Increasing natural gas use will, without question, increase GHG pollution. The IESO forecasts that emissions from natural gas-fired power plants will grow by 375 percent by 2030 and by more than 600 percent by 2040⁷. Ontario could lose almost half of the ground-breaking GHG emission reductions achieved by closing coal-fired power plants. To add insult to injury, the Ford government plans to exempt gas-fired plants from virtually all carbon taxation. This 97 per cent exemption is grossly unfair to Ontario consumers who must pay the full tax rate.



¹ “Joe Oliver on climate change: ‘Scientists have recently told us our fears are exaggerated’, Maclean’s, April 12, 2013

² “Oliver: Climate change alarmists seriously harm the economy,” Toronto Sun, Nov 26, 2018

³ “Doug Ford government appoints a Tory climate denier to board overseeing Ontario’s electricity system”, National Observer, March 28, 2019.

⁴ Ford Government Pays \$2.8 Billion for 3 Fossil Power Plants, Ontario Clean Air Alliance, April 30, 2020.

⁵ “Ontario to increase use of gas-fired plants for energy, raising further questions about climate commitments,” Globe and Mail, October 7, 2022 <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-ontario-natural-gas-energy/>

⁶ Getting Ontario to a Zero-Carbon Electricity Grid by 2030, Ontario Clean Air Alliance Research, p.13. https://www.cleanairalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Zero-Emissions-Report-2022-jan-19-v_01.pdf

⁷ Ibid, p3.



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ACTION
NOW**

The Ford plan to step up GHG-emitting fuel for Ontario power is a short-sighted and costly mistake. The International Energy Agency has been a consistent promotor of the fossil fuel industry. But the IEA published a 2021 report stating that if we are to meet our commitments to the Paris Accords (not exceeding a 1.5C increase in global heating) then we must completely transform how we produce, transport and consume energy. The report called for an end to investment in fossil fuel sources and a four-fold increase in investments for solar and wind power sources by 2030.

There are indeed less expensive methods to generate power. Renewables would help Ontario transition to a zero-carbon electricity system. In Alberta, a jurisdiction symbolic of subservience to the oil and gas industry, renewable energy companies are set to feed green power into the provincial grid, providing cheaper power than that generated by gas-fired plants.⁸



Ontario needs an alternative plan for generating electricity that puts people and the climate first. This plan should include:

- ! The phase-out of all gas-fired plants in the province,**
- ! Full carbon taxation of gas-fired plants while they remain in service,**
- ! Increasing imports of Quebec water-powered electricity,**
- ! Curtailing gas-fired electricity exports,**
- ! Procuring new wind and solar electricity supplies at the lowest possible cost,**
- ! Supporting local (municipal) energy efficiencies and small-scale renewable energy projects.**

Opposition to gas-fired electricity has been growing. Thirty-four municipalities have passed resolutions calling for a gas-plant phase out.⁹ More are expected to join the call.

Speaking of symbols, Ford's appointment of a climate breakdown denier to head up the IESO speaks volumes. No surprise that, instead of winding down fossil-fuel generated electricity, his government is boosting green-house gas (GHG) emitting fuels. This scheme is a climate crime – but one that can be solved.

⁸ <https://www.pembina.org/media-release/REP2-auction-delivers-good-news>

⁹ [Municipalities to date (July 2022)]
Kitchener, Halton Hills, Hamilton, Burlington, Windsor, Township of Selwyn, Township of Woolwich, Township of King, St. Catharines, Town of Cobourg, Guelph, City of Temiskaming Shores, Waterloo, Kingston, City of Niagara Falls, Orangeville, Ajax, Mississauga, Brampton, County of Peterborough, Toronto, Barrie, Sault Ste. Marie, Grimsby, Port Hope, Region of Peel, Brantford, Oakville, Cramahe, Grey Highlands, Ottawa, Quinte West, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula.