

**REMARKS BY
NATURAL RESOURCES MINISTER DONNA CANSFIELD
TO THE ENERGY 2100: MAKING THE LAKES GREAT CONFERENCE
MaRS DISCOVERY CENTRE, SOUTH TOWER, ROOM 100**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2008
12 NOON [LUNCHEON ADDRESS]**

- Good afternoon.
- It's great to join you today.
- My congratulations to Dr. Krantzberg and the conference organizers for providing a first-rate agenda of speakers and workshops to address the urgent public policy challenges around developing clean, sustainable energy for our world.
- My colleague, Energy Minister Gerry Phillips, was at this podium yesterday to tell you about our government's vision for a sustainable energy future.
- And this morning you heard about Ontario's Go Green action plan on climate change from Environment Minister John Gerretsen.
- I'm here to show you how my ministry is supporting Ontario's clean energy and climate change goals by using innovative approaches to increase the use of renewable energy sources.
- Ontario encompasses an area greater than one million square kilometres. That's twice the size of Texas.
- Within our borders are a quarter million lakes and too many rivers to count.
- We're home to tens of thousands of species of plants and wildlife...supported by habitats ranging from tundra and Canadian Shield in the north to tallgrass prairie and Carolinian forest in the south.
- My ministry is responsible for managing the natural resources in this vast and wonderfully diverse area.
- That responsibility makes us a central player in Ontario's climate change action plan.
- The very same natural resources that are threatened by climate change – our forests and waterways – are also part of the solution in that they are sources of clean renewable energy with much untapped potential.

CLEAN ENERGY

- Like the rest of the world, we're at an energy crossroads in Ontario.
- We know that to mitigate the effects of climate change we must change the way we produce, distribute, and consume energy.
- And we know that the choices we make now to meet our growing energy needs will have lasting effects on our environment, our health, our economy – our quality of life – for generations to come.
- Premier McGuinty has made it clear that for Ontario there really is only one choice – we will eliminate the province's dependence on coal-fired generators and make the shift to clean, renewable energy.
- Our goal is to double the province's renewable energy supply by 2025.
- We can achieve this ambitious goal because we've got significant undeveloped waterpower resources – as well as windpower, forest biofibre and cogeneration potential waiting to be put to use.
- Developing our renewable energy potential would be the smart and right thing to do even if we weren't faced with the threat of climate change.
- As well as improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, making the shift to renewable energy will promote economic development in the province, especially for northern and Aboriginal communities.
- Much of the development of renewables will take place on Crown land, which makes up 87 per cent of Ontario and is managed by my ministry.
- We've already begun to give private companies opportunities to use Crown land to develop wind and water power potential, as well as bioenergy from waste wood.
- With our vast forest resources, Ontario is well-positioned to be a big player in the emerging bioenergy industry.
- We've got a sustainable supply of unused forest waste available in our forests that is just sitting there.
- This includes tree tops, limbs and waste left after logging operations, as well as trees destroyed by fire, insects and disease.
- Turning this waste into a source of clean energy would be a way of growing our own energy – and would make good use of a resource that is now underused or not used at all.

OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY POTENTIAL

- Of course, it wasn't that many years ago that another renewable energy source was thought of more as wishful thinking than a real, practical part of our energy mix.
- Wind power has moved from the fringes to the mainstream in recent years – and nowhere faster than in Ontario.
- Five years ago, there were only 10 wind turbines in Ontario.
- Today, our province is the biggest producer of onshore wind power in Canada with 700 turbines up and running or planned, and applications for more in the works.
- Ontario also has substantial future offshore wind power potential in the Great Lakes – where the winds blow unobstructed.
- In 2006, my ministry placed a deferral on proposals for offshore development in the Great Lakes.
- We needed to get a better understanding of how offshore wind turbines might affect the surrounding environment.
- For the past two years we've been assessing potential benefits and impacts of this technology.
- Our research made it clear that developing offshore wind potential would be practical and environmentally sound once the appropriate infrastructure is in place.
- As a result, we were able to lift the deferral last January and began accepting applications for exploration proposals.
- Our priority as we move ahead will be to continue to harness the benefits of onshore wind energy and explore the possibilities of offshore potential, without compromising the long-term health and environment of the Great Lakes.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GREAT LAKES

- The Great Lakes, and the rivers and underground waters that flow into them, are vital to Ontario for reasons beyond just wind power.
- They're a central part of our economy, our environment and our culture.
- Ontario was proud to play a lead role in strengthening the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement signed by Ontario, Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states in 2005.

- The agreement was a vital step toward a shared approach to the challenges facing the Great Lakes region by essentially banning diversions and committing states and provinces to water conservation goals and objectives.
- We're making excellent progress in ensuring this historic agreement is enshrined in legislation throughout the Great Lakes Basin.
- I'm pleased to report that so far Great Lakes governors and over 95 per cent of legislators have supported the agreement as have Ontario and Quebec.
- Maintaining a healthy natural environment in the Great Lakes must include controlling the introduction and spread of invasive species.
- More than 180 invasive species have been found in the lakes, and a new species is found at a rate of about two a year.
- My ministry welcomed the Ontario government's recent commitment to allocate \$15 million to support the establishment of a center in Sault Ste. Marie dedicated to invasive species management.
- We'll be seeking matching funds from the federal government to allow us to go ahead with building the center.
- But while we continue to take different measures to protect and restore these waters, we're increasingly aware of growing pressures on the environment right across the Great Lakes Basin.
- These include lower water levels, poor air and water quality, and loss of habitat for fish and wildlife.
- The catalyst for many of these pressures is climate change.
- There is no longer any doubt that climate change is the biggest single challenge to sustainability we face as resource managers in the 21st century.
- Warming temperatures and less precipitation means we need to be prepared to handle the possibility of more natural disasters – such as forest fires, flooding and insect infestations.
- Lower water levels make it harder to run our hydro dams, which deprives us of one of the greenest sources of energy we have.
- And reduced supplies of water could have significant impacts on recreational and commercial fishing industries, recreational boating and Great Lakes shipping.

- Scientists in my ministry have been leaders in conducting research and gathering information on climate issues for many years.
- Our solid scientific research, policy development and program delivery place us in a key strategic position to help the province deal with and adapt to the effects of climate change.

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION PLAN

- Protecting and sustaining such a large and complex ecosystem requires many different tools.
- Another way we're helping to protect the Great Lakes is through support for regulation plans that ensure water levels and flow are sufficient to sustain healthy wetlands, fish and wildlife.
- Regulating water levels and flow in the boundary waters between Canada and the United States is one of the responsibilities of the International Joint Commission.
- The Commission recently put forward for public consultation a new regulation plan for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.
- The lake and river are partially controlled by the Moses-Saunders Generating Station which spans the St. Lawrence River at Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York.
- The need for a new regulation plan for these waters had become apparent in 1999.
- That's when the IJC informed the governments of Canada and the United States that it was becoming increasingly urgent to carry out a comprehensive review of water levels controlled by the Moses-Saunders dam.
- The Commission was concerned that after 50 years of regulation, the water levels in the system controlled by the dam weren't being allowed to fluctuate sufficiently to sustain coastal wetlands and biodiversity.
- The old plan provided many economic benefits but it was also contributing to the decline of various species of birds, fish and wildlife.
- A subsequent five-year study led by the IJC produced three options which were put forward for public consultation in 2006.
- Public comment on these three proposals turned out to be sharply divided.
- So the Commission took the plans back and did some further work.
- The result is Plan 2007 – a compromise proposal released by the IJC last month.

- Ontario has studied Plan 2007 closely and it has many good features.
- It increases economic benefits for every sector and it does more for the environment.
- However, we also believe that it won't do enough to sustain the health of the lake and the river in the long term.
- Ontario believes there is still the most merit in the Plan B+ option – one of the original three proposals developed by the IJC.
- This option takes steps toward emulating the natural pattern of water flow and level variability that existed before the dam was built in the 1950s.
- We believe our choice would be better for the environment than Plan 2007, offering greater protection for wetland habitats that support many species, including some that are at-risk.
- We also believe this choice is better at balancing the various interests in these waterways – including those of shore property owners, commercial navigation and recreational boaters.
- While supporting this option, we recognize there may be a need to consider mitigation measures to ensure effective shoreline management.
- Having made our views known about which plan Ontario supports, I want to be clear that we respect the fact there is a public consultation process now under way.
- The IJC hearings on Plan 2007 are an important opportunity for people to make their views known on how Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River should be managed
- Ontario encourages the public, stakeholders and First Nations communities to participate in this consultation process.
- We look forward to working with all parties, and we will continue to engage with the International Joint Commission, federal government departments, the Province of Quebec and New York State to find an acceptable solution.
- Ontario is seeking a regulation plan that will best ensure the sustainability of this important shared resource and the ecosystems it supports – now and into the future.
- We're committed to working with other governments to develop and implement the measures needed to make this plan a reality.
- From developing renewable energy ... to planting trees ... to protecting endangered species and habitats...we're working to build a brighter, cleaner future for our province, our natural resources and our people.

- And a healthier and sustainable future for our precious Great Lakes.
- We will continue to act locally, and that's important.
- But we know that the challenge of addressing climate change is, in fact, a global one – and that success in meeting that challenge requires a global perspective.
- This conference is an invaluable opportunity for you to exchange ideas across countries and across continents.
- To learn from each other's experiences.
- And to ultimately use that knowledge to help make a positive difference to the future health of our planet.
- We all have a lot to gain from what goes on here.
- Thanks for giving me the opportunity to talk to you today.
- Enjoy the rest of the conference.