



Energy 2100

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April 22 & 23, 2008

MaRS Discovery Centre, Toronto

Making the Lakes Great

Energy options that sustain the Great Lakes

REMARKS BY



The Honourable John Gerretsen

Minister of the Environment

Wednesday, April 23, 2008 (8:15 A.M.)

Good morning, everyone.

Minister Gerretsen speaking at the Energy 2100 Conference: Making the Lakes Great - MaRS Discovery District - Toronto I'm glad to be here and I'd like to thank our hosts, the Dofasco Centre for Engineering and Public Policy at McMaster University for the invitation to join you this morning.

I also want to thank your director, Dr. Gail Krantzberg. During her long and distinguished career with the Ministry of the Environment, Gail inspired everyone with her dedication to protecting our Great Lakes waters.

And I am pleased to be here talking about the Great Lakes. I was pleased when the Premier appointed me to take on the job of Minister of the Environment for Ontario.

My background is mainly in the municipal arena. Much of what we need to do to protect our environment involves municipalities, and many of them, as you know, border on our Great Lakes.

I remember my first involvement in an IJC conference in the late 80's - it was one of the first times that municipalities had been asked to participate.

I believe we live in a country that is privileged with great resources, particularly the Great Lakes. It is imperative that we steward them to the best of our ability.

Climate change and environmental protection have been integral to Premier McGuinty's policies.

You've heard that from Minister Phillips and his commitment to dramatically change the way Ontario produces electricity, making it greener over time, and reducing its carbon content along the way.

You'll also hear later on today from Minister Cansfield, when she talks about how she is approaching Great Lakes water quantity issues, endangered species, and crafting our response to the IJC report on levels and flows of Lake Ontario.

When I became a Minister in 2003, we started to work together in "clusters" as Ministers to coordinate our efforts on key issues. Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Environment have been such a "cluster" - we work effectively together.

Ontario has committed to an aggressive and comprehensive environmental agenda.

From our ongoing work to protect our water from source to tap, to tackling the root causes of global climate change, to reducing exposure to environmental health hazards like toxic chemicals and pesticides - just yesterday we introduced a Bill to prohibit the use and sale of pesticides that may be used for cosmetic purposes. We're also developing a new Lake Simcoe Protection Act. There's a new



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road map for environmental leadership in Ontario. That road map, that vision, is daunting.

But our experience of recent history tells me that our vision is possible.

We're working aggressively to provide cleaner energy ... reduce greenhouse gas emissions ... protect the Great Lakes ... and adapt to the effects of our changing climate.

We've learned a lot in recent decades about the complex interactions involved in protecting our air, land and water.

This is Earth Week — I've met with a number of students from our public schools this week. I have been extremely impressed with the knowledge of the kids on environmental issues. Our teachers are doing a fantastic job of helping these students understand emerging environmental issues.

We have a better understanding than ever before of just how small the world really is. Our actions have powerful consequences that can affect the entire planet.

Here in Ontario we are experiencing rapid growth, especially in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region bordering Lakes Ontario, Lake Huron and Lake Erie.

This presents us with a major challenge. We need to meet our global responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and restoring the Great Lakes while generating enough power for a growing population and greater economic activity.

This gives a whole new urgency to creating the policies we need to address climate change and the Great Lakes.

Most climate change models predict a range of significant impacts — lower water levels ... warmer water ... more extreme weather events, with more droughts, flooding and erosion.

We also must consider the possible failure of key infrastructure ... reduced access to our waterways ... reduced water quality ... and more invasive species disrupting our lakes, rivers and streams.

We're already seeing some of the effects of climate change in the Great Lakes Basin.

Clearly, these are significant challenges — not just for Ontario, but also for Canada and our neighbouring jurisdictions around the Great Lakes.

We're told that within the next 100 years, the water levels across the lakes could drop by as much as a metre. But the Great Lakes are renewed by precipitation at a rate of only one per cent per year, making them vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and water withdrawals.

How do we go about creating a healthy, sustainable future that will protect the Great Lakes and our waterways?

The basis for our actions is the fundamental realization that we will continue to feel the effects of climate change ... and we must dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the more severe consequences.



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The impact of climate change on the Great Lakes directly affects our ability to produce energy. It could compromise our ability to provide a sustainable future energy supply.

Yesterday, my colleague Energy Minister Gerry Phillips told you about Go Green, Ontario's comprehensive climate change plan.

We've set ambitious targets for greenhouse gas reductions: Six per cent below 1990 levels by 2014 ... and 15 per cent by 2020.

Our government's goal is an energy future for Ontario where we meet our power needs in ways that sustain our natural environment.

We need an evolving energy mix that will rely increasingly upon alternate and renewable sources. Minister Phillips also appropriately emphasized the need to reduce demand through conservation.

And while we need to emphasize conservation of energy use ... that goes hand-in-hand with the need to conserve our water as well.

Energy demand and water demand are linked. In the City of Toronto, for example, it takes more electricity to treat and pump our water and sewage than to run the Toronto Transit Commission.

So, conserving water conserves energy too.

Our infrastructure challenges also make the need to consider climate change more acute. We have recently committed to review our provincial stormwater policies with regard to climate change. That review is underway.

Municipal stormwater management — driven more strongly by sound conservation practices — can play a significant role in both mitigating the impact of climate change on urban communities and adapting to the effects of climate change.

The more we understand the role of water conservation in the energy and climate change equation, the more evident it becomes that we can no longer continue to use water in the same way as we have been used to. We need to safeguard both our water quality and quantity.

Stronger water protections have been an important part of our government's mandate from day one. The work being done right now by our Source Protection Committees and Conservation Authorities is extremely important.

We need to have a new approach to how we use all our water resources ... not just our Great Lakes waters.

We are looking at how we can best protect our watersheds, including for energy production and for drinking water ... and the Premier has made protections for Lake Simcoe a key priority.

These protections are taking many forms — from our Clean Water Act ... to penalties for companies that spill ... to implementing all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations on Walkerton.

We've transformed the way we protect water in Ontario and we're continuing to refine our approach in



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the face of a changing climate.

Adapting to the climate change effects that are already with us is an increasingly important part of our work.

While reducing greenhouse gas emissions is our number one priority, we must face one very serious reality: Even if we could freeze our emissions today, the greenhouse gases already in our atmosphere are already causing climate change.

The predictions vary but changes in our climate caused by human activity will be with us for many decades.

Adaptation is a big challenge but it's one we must meet.

It's our responsibility to future generations and to reducing the degree to which our grandchildren will have to adapt to the effects of climate change.

To ensure that we are guided by innovative thinking and practical advice to meet this challenge, we have created an Expert Panel on Climate Change Adaptation.

We have asked the panel to come up with practical public policy options that can help us prepare for the effects of climate change on our people and communities.

Here in Toronto last month, the panel's co-chairs — Dr. David Pearson and Dr. Ian Burton — headed up the first Premier's National Climate Change Adaptation Summit. One of the key themes was water. The Great Lakes were very much on the agenda.

The summit brought together some of our country's best and brightest from the scientific, technical and policy fields to work together to find adaptation solutions.

This is the beginning of a long-term effort to build a more extensive knowledge base of the kind of climate change impacts we can expect in our province.

We intend to incorporate this knowledge in everything we do ... across all government ministries, and in all economic sectors.

The summit was first proposed by Premier McGuinty earlier this year at the meeting of all the premiers in Vancouver.

The Premier is passionate about the importance of adaptation. And he has made it a top priority for our government.

Climate change adaptation is a key concern in all of our efforts on behalf of the Great Lakes.

We've also recently signed two very important agreements that are helping to make adaptation an integral part of all our actions to protect the Great Lakes.

The first is the 2007 Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.



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Ontario worked hard to ensure the agreement contained explicit climate change adaptation commitments.

We also signed the Great Lakes Charter Annex with Quebec and the eight Great Lakes states. The agreement includes a commitment to monitor and, where necessary, take action to address the cumulative effects of water-takings and climate change.

This agreement will guard against new diversions of Great Lakes water to other parts of North America.

And as part of the commitments under the Annex, Ontario has put adaptation front and centre in our Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Waters Act.

By banning large-scale transfers out of the basin and implementing charges for commercial and industrial water users, we're working to protect not just the quality but also the quantity of our water.

This act will help relieve some of the pressures that climate change is already putting on our waterways.

We have to continue to work with all our partners, here in Canada and across our borders, to protect our shared resources.

In fact, this coming January will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the Boundary Waters Treaty between Canada and the United States.

This treaty led to the creation of the International Joint Commission and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement — which have driven the vast majority of our bi-national efforts to preserve and protect the Great Lakes.

It's been more than 20 years since the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement was last updated. Ontario has been participating in a review of the act and we've made numerous recommendations to the federal government and hope to see them implemented.

We all know that the Great Lakes are a priority. If the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement has become outdated ... then it's time to reinvigorate it.

After all, the Canada-US agreement was the catalyst for so many of the great success stories we've seen in the Great Lakes Basin.

We have a real opportunity coming up in January to make a big push for the renewal of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

In addition to being the anniversary of the Boundary Waters Treaty, it's also when a new U.S. president takes office.

All three of the major candidates have signed a pledge to do more for the Great Lakes.

A new Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement would signal a new era of bi-national co-operation. It would be the most effective way to engage the federal governments of both of our countries in a cause that is vital to our shared health and prosperity.



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Between now and January, we're going to be developing Ontario's position and we'll be counting on input from the people in this room and countless organizations and individuals who are passionately involved in the future of the Great Lakes.

We have a big responsibility to the Great Lakes — and it's never been greater with the region so vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

We have some big challenges but I am optimistic we can see real progress.

I have touched today on only a few of those challenges.

One: how to plan for both energy and water conservation.

Two: how to build climate change resilience into our plans ... to ensure that here in the Great Lakes Basin we can adapt to climate change and protect our people, our special places and our infrastructure.

And three; how we must use our agreements with other governments, both with the federal government and the neighbouring states within the Great Lakes Basin, so that together, we can pursue the real work that we to undertake to address global warming.

The future health of the Great Lakes is inherently linked to our ability to ensure a sustainable energy system and address climate change.

Let's not look at this as a problem, but as an opportunity.

People the world over are coming together to find ways to make a difference in the fight against climate change.

That alone is good news for the Great Lakes.

Let's continue to work together to restore and revitalize the Great Lakes. We'll be creating a cleaner, healthier and better future — for our families, our communities and, ultimately, our planet.

Thank you.