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Public interest groups in court to appeal plan to refurbish aging nuclear reactors

*Human health and environmental risks not carefully considered in plan to refurbish Darlington nuclear reactors, groups say*

TORONTO – Public interest groups are in the Federal Court of Appeal today to ensure that human health and environmental risks are carefully considered in a plan to refurbish four aging nuclear reactors at the Darlington site on the shores of Lake Ontario. This comes on the heels of the Toronto Executive Committee’s passing of a motion calling for a review of nuclear emergency plans.

“In our view, the environmental assessment did not properly address the risks posed by nuclear waste storage and management, or the potential human health and environmental effects of a large accidental radiation release” said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, senior energy analyst with Greenpeace Canada. “These risks must be fully considered in order to make an informed decision on whether this project should move forward.”

Lawyers from Ecojustice and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) are working on behalf of Greenpeace Canada, Lake Ontario Waterkeeper, CELA, and Northwatch in this case.

“Despite failing to answer questions about storage and disposal of nuclear fuel waste or the potential for a major accident, Ontario Power Generation was given the go-ahead to refurbish the reactors,” said Kaitlyn Mitchell, Ecojustice lawyer. “This does not reflect a precautionary approach to environmental decision-making.”

Ontario Power Generation has proposed refurbishing four aging nuclear reactors at its Darlington site so they can remain operational until 2055. The four reactors are located on the shore of Lake Ontario, approximately 70 kilometres east of downtown Toronto. Normal operations of the existing plant impact Lake Ontario as well as local air quality in the Municipality of Clarington.

“Before the government agrees to extend the life of Darlington’s aging nuclear reactors, our clients want to ensure compliance with Canadian environmental assessment legislation,” said Rick Lindgren, Canadian Environmental Law Association lawyer. “Our clients’ position is that the environmental study of the Darlington refurbishment proposal does not adequately satisfy the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.”

“Lake Ontario is a vital part of daily life for nine million people. It can and should be protected from the impacts and risks posed by operating rebuilt reactors at the Darlington site. That is what a full environmental assessment promises,” said Mark Mattson, president of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper.



The groups have also applied to the Supreme Court of Canada seeking to overturn a Federal Court of Appeal ruling which they say allows regulators to avoid careful consideration of serious environmental and human health impacts associated with a separate plan to build new nuclear reactors at the Darlington site.

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