

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ontario's Energy Bill is a set up for more gas plant fiascos, say environmentalists**

**24 February 2016 (Toronto)** - The Wynne government's proposed changes to Ontario's energy planning laws will increase secrecy and the potential for more gas plant fiascos, say environmental groups.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), Greenpeace and the Green Energy Coalition (GEC) will tell a committee of the Legislature today that Bill 135, which amends Ontario's provincial energy planning laws, should be amended or thrown out.

"Bill 135 is a dangerous power grab. Despite committing to be the most transparent government in Canada, the Wynne government is proposing to reduce transparency, public scrutiny and checks on the Minister of Energy's power," said Shawn-Patrick Stensil, a senior energy analyst with Greenpeace.

The Wynne government said Bill 135 will "enshrine in law a transparent, efficient, and responsive energy planning process", but the Bill actually gives the Minister of Energy an almost unfettered control over energy planning. By eliminating requirements for information disclosure, meaningful public participation and Ontario Energy Board (OEB) reviews, and continuing to exempt energy plans from environmental assessments, the Ontario government is retreating from transparency and accountability in a sector plagued by scandal and cost inefficiency.

To protect electricity consumers and the environment, the groups want the Bill either thrown out or amended to require public reviews of major investments such as reactor life-extensions before they proceed and to establish conservation and efficiency as the priority energy choice.

"This Bill will encourage more gas plant fiascos. Transparency and public review saves money in the long-term because it keeps political power in check," said David Poch, counsel for the Green Energy Coalition (GEC).

The groups say the draft law's biggest flaw is its silence on the ten risky and expensive reactor life-extensions announced earlier this year by the Wynne government. Although the Wynne government has promised it will create "off-ramps" if these multi-billion nuclear projects go over-budget, this promise is only symbolic unless Bill 135 is amended to include criteria and mechanisms ensuring independent review of these multi-billion dollar decisions.

"An independent public review of reactor life-extension at Bruce and Darlington should be enshrined in law. Without independent review, these decisions will be made behind closed-doors and vulnerable to industry lobbyists," said Jacqueline Wilson, counsel with the CELA.

The groups will present their concerns to the Standing Committee on General Government later today.

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**For more information:**

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