

Holland Marsh Growers' Association
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December 17, 2008

Agatha Garcia-Wright
Director
Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch
Ministry of the Environment
2 St. Clair West, Floor 12A
Toronto
ON M4V 1L5

Dear Ms. Garcia-Wright:

In light of the recent decision by the Independent Panel at the Ontario Power Authority to locate a peaker plant facility near the heart of Ontario's greatest agricultural land, we, the Holland Marsh Growers' Association Board of Directors, would like to request both a delay and/or an injunction of that decision and a subsequent meeting with yourself and Ministry staff to review our concerns – and those of our farmer membership.

The truth is, no one – not the country's top scientists, not its leading experts, and certainly not a company employed by Pristine Power to arrive at conclusions that would favour construction of that facility – can know what the realities of this decision on the uniquely organic-based soil will be. What is known, to a certainty, is that similar facilities have wreaked havoc throughout the countryside of other nations, from exploding plants to toxic emission pollutants falling miles from their origin.

The Holland Marsh is a uniquely distinct area – with its own micro-climate (attributable to its "bowl"-like design), a rich, organic-based soil that is world renowned for its abilities to grow the safest, healthiest, most nutritious vegetables around, and with a farmer-driven mentality that that environment needs to be protected now and for future generations wanting to eat. We shouldn't have to mention to you that this part of Ontario is enshrined under the Greenbelt Act nor mention to you that this area, this "site" falls under the Specialty Crop area designated again within the Province of Ontario. We shouldn't need to mention that the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, now before the

legislature, incorporates articles that specifically mandate items, such as this peaker plant, to NOT be part of the Lake Simcoe basin nor should it be brought forward that both the provincial government and the federal government have strong interests in cleaning up this vital part of the Ontario landscape.

In addition, it goes without saying that this facility is not necessary at this moment, given the economic downturn, the fallout of massive manufacturing job losses, and the closures of facilities in the province. But hard times, as we know, can turn – but returning this area to its “pristine” environment decades down the road after it has been laid to waste with the toxins and poisons that will spew from these giant stakes will not occur. As a matter of fact, this facility, and not other issues facing the area may, very well, end agriculture in the Holland Marsh as we know it. Such a grave thought is not far down the road. This is not about nitrous oxide, which some believe helps with plant growth (it doesn’t) but rather, about the greenhouse gas emissions that will make this area the most pollutant in the province. Instead of stories in the media featuring items like new vegetable varieties feeding a new generation of immigrants, or about the abundance of locally-grown, locally-produced, locally-harvested foods – it will be the McGuinty government legacy to read stories like that which appeared in the United States recently (<http://www.truthout.org/121008T>) highlighting the toxicity levels in school-aged children who learn in the shadows of smokestacks.

We are asking the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full-scale, environmental study not based on the scientific models of the day, using weather information from Toronto Pearson Airport or mineral-based soil sample studies from greenhouse operations in Ottawa, but rather – a hands-on, muck-based, Holland Marsh (unique microclimate and all) study that shows this area for what it is – a special part of Ontario.

In fact, the Holland Marsh Growers’ Association is strongly requesting the Ministry of the Environment intervene on behalf of farmers, school children in the Christian School located less than 500 metres away, and other stakeholders in the area (including the majority of King Township residents) allow for a bump-up so that a proper Environmental Assessment be conducted. Not one that involves ticking off the proper box on a sheet of paper but one that involves months, if not years, of active study to ensure that a mistake is not made now that will likely cost future Ontarians an opportunity to access fresh vegetables if there comes a day when our borders are closed down to other jurisdictions. This is a debate about energy versus food – with the environment of Ontario’s most unique agricultural lands in the balance, hinging on the political decisions made by an “independent panel” looking at a flat map without any topographic details. Proximity to a location does not mean it is the right choice.

Sincerely

Jamie Reaume
Executive Director
Holland Marsh Growers’ Association
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