

February 2, 2009

An Open Letter to the Residents of the Holland Marsh and Area

There was a time in our history as proud Canadians that government listened. It listened to the people, respected their opinions, and respected the values that were instilled generation after generation. There was even a time when your government representatives – whether they are municipal, provincial, or federal – took the time to understand your issues, the ones that resonated within the communities that they were, through our democratic process, elected to protect.


As I hear more about the direction of this North York peaker plant to be constructed at the very edge of Canada's most productive agricultural land – I question where we, as a society, went wrong. I question any government that would allow for the subsequent destruction and environmental degradation of an area that has, for generations, provided Canadians with safe, healthy, nutritious, and local produce. I question any government that would see the end of Ontario's Salad Bowl, the Holland Marsh. I question any government that allows for energy, derived from our depleting fossil fuel base, to become the over-riding factor in such a monumental decision without having a clear, concise plan for the future.

This decision favours the exportation of our valuable resources at a time when protectionism is running rampant; it favours private investment from our American compatriots even though it will inevitably require public funds to likely finish the project, maintain the project, and keep it running over the more than 20 plus years of devastating environmental impact that it will have throughout the area; and it takes into account absolutely no alternatives and, more importantly, no basis into the realities for today – and our tomorrows.

Beyond the energy versus food implications, this is a project that is poorly conceived for so many reasons. Why, as a society, have we decided that conservation goes out the window? Why did we not challenge our economy, our people towards the provision of new technologies that would eradicate our dependence upon a rapidly depleting resource? Why should we not look at eradication of this dependence as a means of re-inventing ourselves to become the green society that is needed today so that our future generations will enjoy this world as we have? This decision brings into question what, exactly, government is supposed to be – a beacon of innovation and a shining light of reason in troubling times or a near unregulated body that has become so distant from the needs of its citizens that it renders itself unaccountable.

In my opinion, this is not only environmentally disastrous and devastating, but could be argued that it goes against any accord signed to protect our species against the impact of climate change, including the failed Kyoto Protocol – a decision made with the best of intentions by governments with no political backbone and even less foresight upon a future clouded by uncertainty.

Case in point. On the one hand, you have an Ontario Premier who wants to bring in environmental legislation that will match the toughness and integrity of the State of California. Yet, governments continue to consider this facility – and dozens like them – that are emitters of toxic pollutants and, more importantly, the number one climate enemy: methane gas, the key contributor to greenhouse gas. This is a position known as having your cake and eating it too.

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When it comes to the environment and the future of our children, that can't be the attitude of government and its decision makers who impact upon the daily lives of our fellow citizens.

The time has come to right this wrong. The time has come to change our attitudes about what is important, and what isn't. The time for change, like that accepted by our American brethren, is now. We, as a society, must tell government that their priorities are not our priorities. This decision, to put a peaker plant into the most fertile agricultural lands in North America, is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to poor judgement, poor planning, poor insight, and – more importantly, poor listening.

I encourage everyone to continue to combating this issue – for its myriad reasons, not the least of which is the environment, the health of your fellow citizens, and the integrity of your community. It only takes one person with vision to begin and lead a revolution that can change the mindset of politicians eager to destroy generations of life and, at the same time, capture the hearts of the community they serve.

Find that leadership amongst yourselves. Find that message, work with others, and put pressure upon those who would stand in your way – primarily the political system that allows for the death and destruction of all that we love. We, as a species and as a nation, have come too far to let the actions of a few dictate the responses of the majority.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth May, O.C.
Leader