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Portrait of a madman

Just how far will he go?

Since Dalton McGuinty stared into a television camera in a leaders' debate in 2003 and promised he would rid the province of coal-fired electricity generation by 2007, there has been no barrier, no regulation, no safeguard strong enough or important enough to slow Dalton McGuinty from his futile obsession with wind and solar powered generation. Never mind that eight years later Ontario is still generating electricity from coal, and despite lavishing developers, conglomerates and others with billions of taxpayer's dollars—he is no closer to his goal than he was in 2003.

So he has become more desperate. Now he appears willing to throw entire species under the bus for the sake of a piddly and unreliable trickle of electricity that might from time to time be emitted from an array of massive turbines on Crown land on Prince Edward County's south shore.

A quick recap of the madness that has twisted Ontario's energy supply so far under Dalton McGuinty's guidance:

- billions of dollars spent and committed to developers to erect an intermittent power supply that cannot be harnessed by our grid operator or consumers;
- billions more committed to Korea's Samsung in a deal negotiated in secret and of which Ontarians remain in the dark;
- legislation that removes local government input and authority over wind and solar factories in their jurisdictions;
- the replacement of environmental, archeological, social and economic impact scrutiny applicable to every other power or infrastructure development by a check-the-box process for wind and solar factory developers. Did you consult with the community? Yes? Check. Did you consult with the municipality? Yes? Check. It matters not that any of the folks consulted had critical objections, only that they were consulted;

- Crown land, set aside by our ancestors to preserve natural features and beauty, sacrificed and handed over to developers— whose interest in the land extends not one second past the 20 year life of the guaranteed power purchase contract it holds;

- residents forced from their homes and made ill due to vibration and noise from neighbouring wind turbines; and

- not as well understood are provisions in the *Green Energy Act* that compel the Ontario Energy Board and grid operators to take intermittent electricity from wind and solar electricity generators. These utilities have no use for electricity they can't dispatch (turn on or turn off) so, under orders, they take the wind and solar-powered electricity and fork over to other markets or risk putting the system out of balance. Those markets like Michigan and Ohio are happy to take it off our hands—for a hefty fee. We are being held ransom daily in the electricity market by one man's misguided obsession. In the United Kingdom the government has begun paying intermittent electricity generators to disconnect from the grid for the same reason.

Now the McGuinty government seems willing to look the other way, as land we know to be populated by endangered species— namely the Blanding's turtle and whippoorwill— is excavated and mauled to enable the erection of nine industrial wind turbines.

I don't wish to be too precious about this. Exemptions exist in the regulations to allow reasonable folks working in good faith to make isolated decisions if it means overall improvement and benefit to the species involved.

But there is scant evidence that Dalton McGuinty cares one whit about the wildlife that is mown down in his quest for green glory.

On Wolfe Island the McGuinty government assured us all that if the industrial wind turbines proved to have a harmful effect on wildlife, beyond a kill rate they deemed acceptable, they would take action including shutting down turbines.

So between July 1 and Dec. 31, 2009 a study was conducted on Wolfe Island to measure the impact of the project. The news was very bad. It has been a bloodbath for birds and bats since the turbines arrived. Entire species are gone. Others are in rapid decline.

According to Nature Canada, the result of the monitoring study “revealed shockingly high numbers of fatalities of both birds and bats.” They concluded that “there is no denying the impact of this project is too high and beyond tolerance.”

So what has Dalton McGuinty done? Absolutely nothing. It's business as usual for the wind factory operator.

Is this what McGuinty's green future looks like—destroying Crown land, disrupting natural habitat, killing endangered species?

Yet he isn't anywhere close to his goal—wind and solar have not put dent into traditional sources of electricity. Consumer bills are rising fast. Shorelines and horizons across the province are being spoiled for a generation or more.

What will McGuinty do with another four years? A number of species, including our own, had better prepare for the worst.

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