

To: Hon. Christopher Bentley  
Ministry of Energy  
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cc.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty  
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
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Hon. James Bradley  
Ministry of the Environment,  
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Hon. Brad Duguid  
Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation  
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Hon. Kathleen Wynne  
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Hon Deborah Matthews  
Ministry of Health and Long-term Care  
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The Honourable Dwight Duncan  
Minister of Finance  
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Dear Minister Bentley:

The 21-member groups of the Ontario Zero Waste Coalition were disturbed to read remarks you made in a newspaper article about the Feed-In-Tariff Review by Tara Hatherly published on December 24<sup>th</sup> 2011, where you stated: "There are a number of initiatives around the province involving energy from waste, and it's a way of combining two issues — what do we do with waste, and how can we get the power and are there synergies when you combine the two," Mr. Bentley said. "All of these sources of power make a contribution to the overall mix, and a contribution to the diversity of mix that you need in terms of power."

We want to express our strongest objections to any plan to include the incineration/gasification or any thermal treatment of municipal solid waste in the Feed-In-Tariff program.

As you know municipal solid waste (MSW) was specifically excluded from being defined as renewable biomass under Ontario's Electricity Act and for good reason. Most of what comprises MSW is compostable (40 to 60%), recyclable, reusable or shouldn't be manufactured in the first place and could be eliminated with a combination of good extended producer responsibility laws, reduced packaging laws and other Zero Waste policies, initiatives and legislation. If San Francisco can reach 78% diversion rates, why can't Ontario Municipalities? And why has the Province focused so little attention on reducing waste in the commercial/industrial sector? According to Ontario's Environmental Commissioner while municipal diversion rates have been increasing, commercial/industrial rates have been decreasing leaving Ontario's diversion rate stuck at 23% for a decade. What this issue needs is leadership, good policies and good legislation, not magic box solutions that will cause more harm than good.

As Tim Butters, a spokesman for the Ontario Power Authority, recently explained in a January 6, 2012 Owen Sound Times article that energy from waste was explicitly excluded from the FIT program because: "A renewable energy source means an energy source that is renewed by natural processes including wind, water, biomass, biogas, biofuel, solar energy, geothermal energy and tidal forces. A fuel is not considered renewable if it does not meet these criteria, regardless of the process by which (it) is treated and burned. Municipal waste is specifically excluded from being defined as renewable biomass under Ontario's Electricity Act." We want it to stay that way.

Our member groups are also deeply concerned that until your recent comments, there was no hint that the Feed-In-Tariff Review would consider changing the fundamental premise on which the Green Energy Act was based and that is the definition of "renewable energy source". On your website the areas for review that were stated included:

1. A careful examination of FIT pricing to maintain a balance between the

interests of ratepayers and the continued encouragement of clean energy investment in Ontario. This is expected to result in reduced FIT prices for future contracts.

2. Potential inclusion of new and emerging technology types.
3. Assessment of government policies and tools to ensure that Ontario remains a center of manufacturing excellence and clean energy job creation.
4. Consideration of outreach techniques to complement the province's Renewable Energy Approval (REA) process.

You worked with the Green Energy Alliance to create the Green Energy Act. Have you consulted with them on fundamentally changing the definition of "renewable energy source"? What public consultation have you engaged in?

In the December 24<sup>th</sup> 2011 Hatherly article, you went on to say that diversifying Ontario's power supply is currently the Province's top priority. While we agree the Province should diversify its power sources we most emphatically do not agree that dirty, inefficient, expensive energy from burning municipal solid waste should be added to the mix. Many studies have shown that incinerators of municipal solid waste are dirtier than coal in terms of emissions (see the attached reports). This Province made closing down dirty, coal-driven energy plants a priority to improve air quality and protect public health. How can you now possibly be considering adding municipal solid waste burners as acceptable energy generators worthy of taxpayer subsidies? Take a look at what the American Lung Association has to say: <http://www.lungusa.org/associations/states/new-york/pressroom/news-releases/2010-2011/REL-advocates-urge-psc-to-reject-11-15-11.html>

We understand that there is tremendous pressure in Europe and North America from the huge, multi-national incinerator companies like Covanta, and from want-to-be incinerator operators like the shell company Partners Energy Group that recently tried to hoodwink Meaford into signing a 20-year gasification plant deal, to usurp government green energy tariff programs and line their coffers with buckets of taxpayer money. We expect the government to withstand that pressure and ensure that taxpayer/ratepayer money goes to support truly green energy projects.

When you burn garbage, you do not produce green energy no matter what ridiculous claims the incinerator industry makes about their magic no-emission burners. Instead you foster dirty energy that emits fine particulates and a stew of toxics that ride the fine particulates straight into human bloodstreams. Tests of Ottawa's Plasco incinerator demonstrated that it exceeded emission limits 25 times over 283 days of operation (or once in every 11 days of operation). Plasco exceeded emission standards for Particulate Matter, Hydrogen Chloride, Cadmium, Lead, Mercury, Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxides, and dioxins and furans. And yet, Plasco was given the green light by this government to begin a new phase and collect

taxpayer subsidies to boot. Covanta has been taken to court and fined numerous times by various American states for exceeding emissions limits yet they have won approval to build a mass burner in our Province.

Waste is not a "renewable resource" like wind, solar or tidal energy. It consists almost exclusively of valuable resources that could be recycled or reused. Thermal technologies destroy these valuable resources forever also negating all the energy that was used to create them in the first place. In a world where the over-consumption of resources lies at the heart of our greatest problems including global warming, deforestation, loss of agricultural land among others, how can you justify destroying resources? What legacy are we leaving for our children?

Many municipalities are eager to embrace these magic box options because they want to avoid increasing landfill capacity but incineration/gasification doesn't eliminate landfill. Instead you get incineration AND landfill with ash from Covanta's Durham plant planned to be trucked to New York State or from Brampton's Algonquin plant trucked to Sarnia (bottom ash) and Quebec (highly toxic fly ash). In the case of Plasco, of the small amount of waste they actually processed (6,635 tonnes) over the three-year trial, 2,348 tonnes of converter ash went to landfill and 515 tonnes toxic bag ash went to a hazardous waste landfill and 373 tonnes of slag went to landfill or almost 50%. As for the airborne emissions (constituting about 70% of whatever was put into the burner), they go up and out the stacks creating landfills in the sky that disperse over a wide area, allowing people for hundreds of miles to enjoy their toxic stew. Given these facts, incineration doesn't sound very much like a local solution to a local problem, does it?

Furthermore, how can a technology that depends on the large-scale generation of garbage possibly be a solution to garbage? In the Durham Covanta deal, Durham Region has signed a contract with Covanta that obliges it to generate 140,000 tonnes of waste per year for some 20 to 35 years (400,000 tonnes annually if the incinerator is up-sized) or pay the consequences to Covanta. Such contracts usually mean paying the equivalent of a tipping fee for every tonne missing – obviously, a disincentive for keeping recycling programs going (Durham's waste diversion program budget was slashed after the deal was signed). So instead of focusing on maximizing resources and learning to live sustainably on a planet with finite resources, you are considering a plan that calls for continually generating waste and destroying valuable resources.

To incentivize incineration would also de-incentivize job creation. On the Ministry of Environment website it states: "Ontario's programs are protecting the environment and helping the economy – seven jobs for every thousand tonnes of waste diverted." ([http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/subject/waste\\_diversion/index.htm](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/subject/waste_diversion/index.htm)) Many studies have found that recycling and reuse opens up many more jobs than landfilling and incineration (see *More Jobs, Less Waste*, attached). Why when our economy is at a this low ebb would you discourage job creation and opportunities for local entrepreneurs, instead favouring policies that would benefit, large

multinationals who create few long-term jobs? The transfer of public money to polluting, private interests must stop.

Lisa Jackson, chief of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was recently quoted as saying: "If we would insist on a recycling rate in our country at 80, 85, 90 percent, we would do a bunch of things. Certainly, we would have a cleaner environment. We would save a tremendous amount of water and energy. We would create millions of jobs because recycling, in and of itself, would become a supply chain in our country — a very domestic one. So, although it sounds simple — when you see those recycling bins, when people start to talk about recycling — think of it as a homegrown jobs program, an environmental program and an energy program and a water program all in one." See the video clip at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMyjFoHLXY>

Given the current rate of unemployment in Ontario and stagnant job creation numbers can we really afford to throw away jobs?

We also wonder how much you have been consulting with, and working with, your fellow ministers in the Ministry's of Environment, Health, Economic Development, Finance and Municipal Affairs. Certainly if you go ahead with this plan it will impact what these other ministries are trying to accomplish, and while we know it is not the Province's job to protect naïve local Council's from making bad deal with hucksters, we have seen enough of how want-to-be incinerator operators work to know that if you further incentivize this industry there will soon be hordes of what one Meaford resident described as "carpetbaggers" making all kinds of ridiculous deals with Councils that leave a legacy of financial and human health problems in their wake.

Incinerators, plasma arc, gasification, pyrolysis, or whatever fancy names the industry has thought up to try and convince the public and politicians that these are not the bad old burners of yesterday, are still very expensive, polluting, facilities that have poor operational records, that bankrupt communities with put-or-pay-contracts and raised tipping fees and that endanger human health by putting lead, mercury, arsenic, dioxins, furans and greenhouse gas emissions into the air while still requiring landfill. They do not make sense from a human health, financial or environmental perspective yet you seem to be considering enabling them by making them eligible for our tax dollars. At a time when your government is in an extremely precarious financial position, where you have asked for deep cuts and layoffs in most ministries, when you have recently cutback critical research dollars for our medical institutes, how can you possibly defend steering new tax dollars into the maws of huge, polluting multinational organizations. It is reprehensible.

And if it goes ahead, if you intend to greenwash this dirty industry and redefine municipal solid waste as a "renewable energy source", we will not be silent.

Yours truly,  
Liz Benneian

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