

June 1, 2016 PWU Letter to the Editor - Toronto Star

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Monday’s anti-Pickering Nuclear Station Extension editorial diatribe by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance (OCAA) is typical of their “dreamweaver”-like campaigns — heavy with the spectre of environmental disaster and fast and loose with the facts.

The Pickering Nuclear Station is licensed and its operations, including emergency preparedness, are overseen by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), an independent regulator. The CNSC has 70 years of experience and is highly regarded internationally.

Additionally, the Pickering Nuclear Station, owned by Ontario Power Generation (OPG), a provincial Crown corporation, routinely provides information and consults with local communities about the plant’s operations.

When the province approved OPG’s plan to pursue the continued operation of Pickering beyond 2020 to 2024, it noted that final approval would be required from the CNSC. Pickering would continue to employ over 4,500 people in Durham region and 8 million tonnes of greenhouse gases would be avoided. Yes, extending the operation of the Pickering Station is about clean air.

The OCAA claims that cheap, low-carbon electricity imports from Quebec offer a superior option, but those claims have been disproven by a number of highly credible analyses, including Ontario’s Independent Electricity System Operator. Billions of dollars would need to be invested to build and improve the transmission interties and transmission lines in Ontario and Quebec. Ontario currently exports low-carbon nuclear power to help Quebec meet its winter peak and refill its reservoirs. Even if Quebec could supply, large-scale electricity imports would mean tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars flowing out of Ontario.

The only real alternative to base-load 24/7 nuclear in Ontario is fossil fuel generation, and we believe the OCAA knows that. Less nuclear generation in Ontario would mean dramatic increases in greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution at a time when the entire world is transitioning to a lower carbon environment.

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President of the Power Workers’ Union