

# Green Prosperity Progress Report – June 2009

## Climate Change

### Progress Report

In late May 2009, the Ontario Government introduced amendments to the *Environmental Protection Act* that would pave the way for a carbon cap and trade system. This is a first step toward action on the province's commitments in both its bilateral agreement with Quebec and through its membership in the Western Climate Initiative to put in place a carbon pricing system. However, at this point the government has made no commitments to price, auctioning of allowances or what sectors will be covered by the system. It seems to be largely waiting to see what other jurisdictions, particularly the U.S. federal government, develop, with a promise that trading could begin "as early as" 2012.

**What's ahead:** The government needs to be more proactive in developing pricing and requirements for auctioning a significant percentage of credits. Ontario can be a leader and signal its commitment to developing a low-carbon economy or remain at the mercy of the federal government's focus on protecting the tar sands.

## Conserving The Boreal Forest

### Progress Report

In early June, the Ontario Government introduced *A Far North Act, 2009*. This legislation is meant to enact the Premier's promise to protect at least 225,000 square kilometres of the intact northern Boreal region and to improve relations with Aboriginal people. For the first time in Ontario's history, the legislation enables First Nations to initiate, develop and approve land use plans. It also has strong objectives to guide planning and references key ecological values and cultural values to be protected. It does need to be strengthened, however, to better recognize the role of First Nations in leading planning both at the community level and at the regional level. Adequate funding is needed to accompany implementation of the Act to make pro-active land-use planning possible, and to provide certainty, a stable business environment and equity for all.

Meanwhile, in the southern Boreal Forest, the only area currently being harvested, it is largely business as usual. The provincial government has produced a caribou recovery plan that is considered weak and habitat regulations have been delayed.

**What's ahead:** Committee hearings on the northern boreal legislation will take place this summer in Toronto and in to-be-determined locations in northern Ontario. This is an excellent chance for remaining issues to be addressed and for the full promise of the Premier's vision to be realized. Second reading is expected in the fall.

The government needs to put in place measures for conserving caribou in the areas of the southern Boreal Forest currently open to logging, including establishing large protected areas.

## **Green Energy**

### **Progress Report**

In May 2009, the Ontario Government passed the *Green Energy Act*. This legislation could have the power to transform Ontario's electricity system with such features as:

- A new feed-in tariff power payment program that will increase the incentive for renewable energy producers to produce clean, emissions free power.
- Better access to the provincial electricity transmission grid for renewable power producers.
- Feed-in tariff project size limits removed for wind, biomass and landfill gas and increased for hydro.
- A boost to conservation and efficiency programs, including conservation targets for local utilities

Overall, the Act could [produce up to 90,000 jobs in Ontario](#) according to a report by the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst by creating highly supportive conditions for green power development in Ontario.

**What's ahead:** With the *Green Energy Act* now in place, this is an excellent time for the government to be looking at green alternatives to rebuilding the Pickering B nuclear station.

## **Reducing Toxics**

### **Progress Report**

In early June, Ontario became the first province in Canada to pass a *Toxic Use Reduction Act*. The legislation, modelled on legislation that has been in place in Massachusetts for over a decade, requires businesses to develop pollution reduction plans. Implementation of the plans is voluntary, but U.S. experience is that companies quickly realize the benefits of reducing toxics — from cost savings to worker health protection. As regulations are developed for the bill, we will be encouraging the government to include a requirement that companies develop full inventories of all toxics used, that a list of safer alternatives be developed and that a research institute be created to assist companies with toxic reduction efforts.

**What's ahead:** As well as the issues outlined above, we will be asking the government to lower the threshold of toxic use that is used to determine which companies will be covered by the legislation and will be seeking to have it extended to municipal sewage treatment plants.

## Great Lakes

### Progress Report

The government is making some progress in developing a broader strategy for Great Lakes protection. In May 2009, it released a discussion paper [\*Healthy Great Lakes, Strong Ontario. Talking with Ontarians about Protecting, Restoring, Using and Enjoying the Great Lakes\*](#)

The paper lays out a good vision for the lakes, but is short on specific goals and objectives.

In particular, the proposed approach could be strengthened with:

- clear timelines and objectives for lagging Great Lakes clean-up projects
- goals for establishing aquatic protected areas
- the province taking a more active role in bi-national negotiations
- a greater effort to reduce stormwater and sewage flows and develop stronger water conservation efforts generally
- regulations to prevent intra-basin transfers

**What's ahead:** The Canadian and U.S. federal governments have committed to beginning discussions on renewing the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement shortly. This is an excellent opportunity for Ontario to promote its vision of healthy Great Lakes supporting a healthy green economy.

## Building Better Transportation Systems

### Progress Report

The 2009 provincial budget put \$490 million into transit projects identified by Metrolinx as “quick win” items. This builds on the province’s MoveOntario 2020 rapid-transit action plan for the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton, a multi-year plan to develop 902 kilometres of new or improved transit services at a cost of \$17.5 billion. (The province is actually committed to providing \$11.2 billion of the total budget for 52 identified projects and is calling on the federal government to make up the difference.) However, the government continues to spend more on highways than transit, with \$2 billion in spending allocated for highways in 2009-10 alone.

The recently adopted Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, a laudable effort to better protect a troubled natural watershed, could be badly undermined by the province’s proposal to increase urban growth in the Highway 400 corridor as part of its newly released Simcoe Growth Plan. The growth plan seems to ignore the province’s own Places to Grow legislation and perpetuates a “highways to sprawl” planning approach.

**What's ahead:** While the provincial government is making significant investments in transit, it needs to further shift spending away from costly sprawl-inducing highway projects and show greater compliance with its own Smart Growth planning framework.

## **Healthy Local Food Systems**

### **Progress Report**

In the fall of 2008, the City of Toronto put in place a new local food procurement policy. The policy calls for City-run daycare facilities to increase their local food procurement by 40% while other City departments were given a target of 50%.

The 2009 Ontario provincial budget also earmarked \$24 million over three years to promote Ontario food products to the broader public sector. The provincial government is also working on revisions to its Ontario Food designations to make it easier for consumers to select locally grown foods.

In the spring of 2009, the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Alliance, a group of agricultural, local food, conservation and community organizations dedicated to the promotion of ALUS throughout the province, was formed. The ALUS Alliance is developing its strategy to ensure ALUS can play an integral role in strengthening Ontario's food system using the principles of incentives for farmers practicing good stewardship and sustainable agriculture.

**What's ahead:** The Local Food Plus certification system is continuing to expand, making it easier for both institutions and individuals to identify and procure local sustainable food products.