



# Sustainable Energy Initiative (SEI)

Bringing together professors, students and professionals in the areas of policy, law, planning, conservation and climate change to help Ontario and Canada advance sustainable energy solutions.



## York University Sustainable Energy Initiative 2011-2012 Seminar Series, Post-election De-brief: Background

The Ontario provincial election on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011 saw green energy as a “wedge issue” with the Progressive Conservatives, led by Tim Hudak, vowing to kill the Green Energy Act. With the Conservatives showing a ten-point lead in public opinion polls in the run-up to the election, the legislation’s future looked uncertain.

However, by election night the Progressive Conservatives’ fortunes had changed, and the Liberals emerged with 53 seats, missing a majority government by one seat. The Progressive Conservatives won with 37 seats, the NDP 17 and the Green Party none. The Liberals and NDP secured the urban vote, with the Conservatives making no gains in the 416 or 905 area codes. But Liberal fortunes seemed to end where the farmland began with the urban ridings in southern and central Ontario finding themselves surrounded by fields of Conservative blue. Several high profile Liberal ministers were defeated in rural ridings including Agriculture Minister Carol Mitchell, Environment Minister John Wilkinson, and Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky.

With a minority government, the Liberals will need the support of either the NDP or the Progressive Conservatives to pass budgets and enact major new legislation. Considering the energy platforms of the NDP and PCs, this could lead to interesting results. The NDP supported renewable energy and the Feed-In Tariff (FIT) model, but proposed to limit FIT contracts to community-based projects. The NDP also proposed to remove the HST from energy bills and greater government involvement in renewable energy development through a revived Ontario Hydro. They committed to not pursuing further nuclear construction or refurbishment projects and shifting investment into conservation and efficiency.

The Progressive Conservatives promised to cancel the FIT program, repeal the GEA and focus on natural gas, hydroelectric and nuclear-based power options instead. The PCs also promised to end time-of-use pricing for electricity consumers and to remove the HST from electricity and home heating bills.

The Green Party platform included prioritizing energy efficiency and conservation, a strong emphasis on community-based renewable energy and CHP development, restoring local decision-making for energy projects, importing hydro-electricity from Manitoba and Quebec as well as proposals for a modest carbon tax.

Given a Liberal minority government, the rural/urban split, divergent energy policies of the NDP and Conservatives, poor showing for the Greens, the impact of the election on sustainable energy and the Green Energy Act remains an open question. The table below provides a detailed breakdown of each party’s election platforms on green energy in Ontario.

## 2011 ONTARIO ELECTION: PARTY PLATFORMS for GREEN ENERGY

### Liberal

- Continue to implement Green Energy Act using FIT to procuring renewable generation.
- Increase the supply of renewable energy to 10,700 MW by 2018.
- Continue to invest in the Smart Grid.
- Continue phase out of coal by 2014.
- Maintain nuclear power at 46% of generating supply.
- Implement Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan.
- Continue to implement efficiency and conservation targets to save 7,100 MW by 2030.

### NDP

- Not proceed with plans to build new nuclear plants and assess the need for nuclear refurbishments.
- Shift nuclear spending to energy efficiency programs.
- Phase-out coal-fired electricity completely by 2014.
- Place coal-fired electricity on emergency standby until phase-out.
- Assess ways of powering the coal-fired plants using biomass.
- Generate 10,700 MW of renewable energy by 2018 with an additional 5,000 MW by 2030.
- Maintain FIT for small and community-based projects.
- Move towards more public ownership of large renewable energy projects partnering with OPG.
- Set 5,000 MW target for combined heat and power generation within 10 years.
- Require a full environmental assessment for the Ontario Long-Term Energy Plan.
- Restrict future FIT contracts to small and community-based projects.
- Join the Western Climate Initiative allowing Ontario firms to participate in continental cap and trade.
- Direct OPA to achieve all possible conservation before adding new supply.
- Offer rebates of up to \$5,000 per household for home retrofits.
- Offer grants of up to \$5,000 for lower-income homeowners and tenants for home retrofits.
- Offer up to \$10,000 in low-interest loans that can be paid back on home hydro bills.
- Remove HST from home hydro and home heating costs.

### PC

- Cancel the FIT and repeal the Green Energy Act.
- Focus on natural gas, hydroelectric and nuclear power options instead of renewable energy.
- Some unspecified amount of renewable energy would be procured at "affordable prices".
- Continue with the coal phase-out by retrofitting old coal plants to burn biomass and natural gas.
- Remove the HST from home hydro and home heating bills.
- End mandatory time-of-use pricing.
- Take steps to make government buildings more efficient.

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## Green

- Prioritize energy efficiency and conservation.
- Promote locally-owned, community-based CHP and renewable energy projects
- Pursue opportunities for energy conservation through CHP.
- Prioritize grid access for CHP projects
- Negotiate the importing of hydroelectricity from Quebec and Manitoba
- Implement a community planning process and restore local decision-making over energy projects.
- Develop long-term plan to move homes and buildings to Zero Net Energy
- Develop a financing program to help home owners finance efficiency and RE improvements
- Support development of district heating and clean energy recovery projects
- Utilize up to 5,000 MW of Ontario's deployable hydro-electric power.
- Increase hydro-electric capacity in Ontario

### Sources:

Green Party of Ontario, Energy Strategy 2011.

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