



## The Ottawa River Institute

4084 Matawatchan Road RR 3 Griffith ON K0J 2R0 613-333-5534

*"Fostering sustainable communities and ecological integrity in the Ottawa River watershed"*

### *Media Release*

## **Ottawa River Institute welcomes Green Energy Act**

(Griffith, Feb 25, 2009) The Ottawa River Institute with its mission to foster sustainable communities and ecological integrity, welcomes the introduction of the Green Energy Act by the Ontario government.

"We are particularly pleased that government acknowledges the great contribution to be made by small power producers who generate clean energy in their widely dispersed communities throughout the province," said Ken Birkett, ORI president. "Right now electricity use in Ontario is not sustainable. Huge quantities of electricity are wasted as a result of inadequate conservation practices and our reliance on centralized generating plants that are highly polluting and are beyond their life expectancy."

The Green Energy Act focuses on expanding renewable energy generation by including feed-in tariffs, which are premium prices guaranteed over the long term, for green energy from the sun, wind, rivers and biomass.

"Although the levels of the tariffs still have to be worked out, we are encouraged that the government has followed the lead of the renewable powerhouses of Europe, such as Germany. There, feed-in tariffs have proven to be a huge incentive for many people to become energy producers, not just consumers, spurring the wide deployment of renewables," said Birkett.

The Green Energy Act also recognizes the value of local ownership of renewable energy generation with its provisions for community power.

"Community ownership ensures that all those affected by projects have input during planning and operation. This also shares the benefits of the projects among those affected," said Birkett

To prevent renewable energy projects from being unduly obstructed, the province will upload from municipalities the regulations for planning renewable energy projects to ensure that they are the same across the province. All told, the new Act will amend 15 government statutes and, when fully implemented, have over 50 supportive regulations. ORI thinks that these changes will succeed in streamlining the nearly impossible process in place now for small renewable energy producers to access the grid.

"It is also crucial that community consultation and environmental and health concerns are respected", said Birkett. "We believe that this act opens the door to many smaller projects owned by individuals or communities. These smaller facilities would reduce the need for large renewable energy generation plants that can affect the natural beauty of areas like the Ottawa Valley. There is a real opportunity in this for local people to get in the business of selling electricity. This can benefit the rural economy," he said.

Birkett is also pleased with the measures in the Green Energy Act to promote conservation. These include planning for energy conservation at the local level, energy audits for homes upon sale and purchase, new energy efficiency standards in the building code, higher energy efficiency standards for appliances, and upgrades to government buildings to bring them up to new energy efficiency standards.

"Effective conservation of electricity is the main way that we will be able achieve the plan of phasing out the huge and dirty coal fired plants," he said.

The Ottawa River Institute is a member of the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, one of the founders of the Green Energy Act Alliance, which has been campaigning for a green energy act for the last six months.

For more information, call: The Ottawa River Institute at 613-333-5534 or visit its website at:

