



Toronto Environmental Alliance

**TORONTO SMOG  
REPORT CARD**

**2003**

Final Grade – C-

# TORONTO SMOG REPORT CARD 2003

Subject	Comments	Grade
Leadership (p.5)	The Smog Plan continues to languish for lack of funding. Council's decision to permit the expansion of the Island Airport is further evidence of a lack of leadership on smog.	F
Transit and Trip Reduction (p.8)	New money for TTC and a promising new Ridership Growth Strategy.	B-
Energy Efficiency and Green Power (p.9)	Moving on only 1/5th of commitments.	D-
Fleets and Fuels (p.11)	Are buying cleaner fuels, but cleaner vehicles on hold.	C+
Bikes and Pedestrians (p.12)	Bike Plan implementation slashed, but the Pedestrian Charter and drive-through ban supports a walkable City.	C+
Public Education (p.13)	Thumbs up to 20/20: The Way to Cleaner Air program and anti-idling blitz.	B
2003 Final Grade		C-

Prepared by:



# This year, TEA has awarded Toronto City Council an overall grade of C- (60%) for their actions on smog

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The Toronto Environmental Alliance's annual Smog Report Card compares Council's actions with their clean air commitments. These commitments were made in the 1997 Toronto Smog Plan, the 2000 Environmental Plan and at the annual Toronto Smog Summits.

This year, the Smog Report Card evaluates Council's actions in 2002–2003 on 33 initiatives in six major areas: leadership, transit, electricity, fleets and fuels, bikes and pedestrians, and public education.

The high point of 2003 was undoubtedly the \$30 million increase in funding to the TTC and the release of the TTC's Ridership Growth Strategy, which lays out how we can increase transit ridership through improved service and lower fares. These forward-looking transit initiatives are the primary reason that this year's Smog Report Card grade is higher this year than last year's D+.

Council is also to be congratulated for passing the drive-through and pesticide by-laws, both of which will reduce smog from unnecessary activities (pesticides are volatile organic compounds, a key ingredient of ground level ozone, while the drive-through by-law will reduce idling and make the city more walkable). Both by-laws are currently facing legal challenges and should be vigorously defended.

## Previous Smog Report Cards

Year	Grade
1998	D (old Toronto) F (Metro)
1999	D
2000	C-
2001	D
2002	D+

Overall, we found that there is a lack of leadership from City Hall on clean air, demonstrated by Council's decision to proceed with expanding the Island Airport. This decision flies in the face of all of Council's fine words on environmental sustainability and better transportation planning, as it will encourage travellers to get out of trains and buses and into heavily-polluting planes for short trips.

Another major low point for 2002 was the decision to move forward on only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of planned green power and energy efficiency measures. This will result in unnecessary smog and fuel expenses, and should be revisited in light of the August 14 blackout.

At the root of the lack of progress on implementing clean air programs is the City's budget process which effectively screens out most environmental initiatives early on because they are defined as 'new programs', even when they have been approved by Council. Last year, for instance, TEA congratulated the City on the initial implementation of its bike plan, but funding for the implementation of the bike plan was cut in half this year.

## Recommendations for the new Council

The detailed Report Card that follows examines a range of initiatives that can and should be undertaken to promote cleaner air in Toronto. The top priorities for the new Mayor and Council elected on November 10 should be:

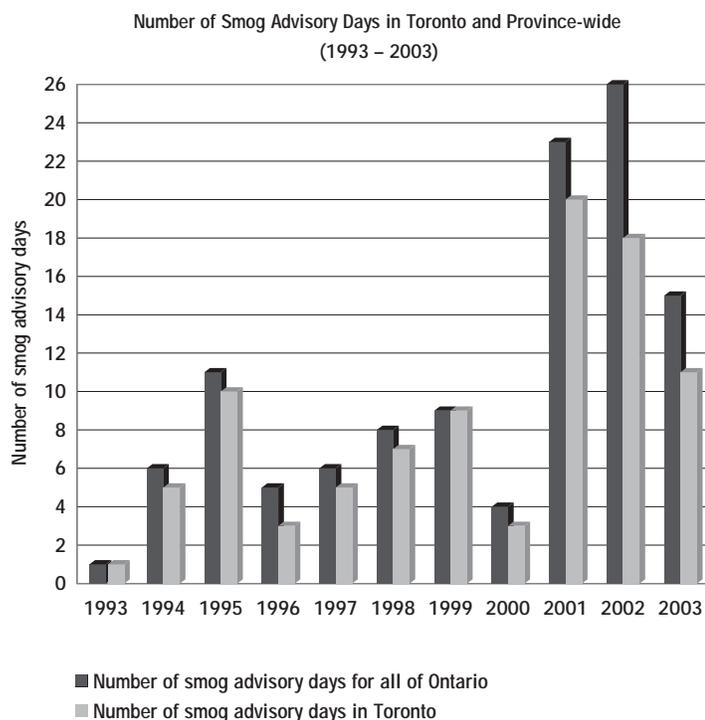
- Implement the TTC's Ridership Growth Strategy.
- Create a Smog Plan Implementation Fund of \$20 million per year to invest in energy efficiency, green fleets, green power and other smog-reducing measures. These investments will reduce energy costs and help lower the city's energy bill.
- Stop the expansion of the Island Airport.

## Toronto Smog Facts

The increasing levels of air pollution are cause for concern, as recent research has shown that:

- 1,000 Toronto residents die prematurely each year due to air pollution and another 5,500 are hospitalized.<sup>1</sup>
- In Ontario, 20% of hospital admissions for acute bronchitis, bronchiolitis and pneumonia in infants under the age of one can be attributed to ozone and fine particulate matter.<sup>2</sup>
- Elevated levels of fine particulate matter are associated with an increase in deaths due to lung cancer. The increased risk of mortality is roughly comparable to second hand smoke or obesity.<sup>3</sup>
- Ground level ozone is now thought to cause childhood asthma, and not simply trigger asthma attacks.<sup>4</sup>
- Toronto hospitals spend over \$150 million per year to treat the victims of air pollution and air pollution costs the Toronto economy \$130 million in lost productivity.<sup>5</sup>
- Ontario's levels of ground level ozone (a key smog component) are rising.<sup>6</sup> Driving this increase are the greater distances we drive (car use is increasing at about 2% per year in Toronto and in the absence of better public transit and more compact, transit-friendly urban planning will continue to rise) and our greater reliance on coal-fired generating stations (electricity production from coal has doubled in Ontario since 1995).

This summer was the third worst year on record for the number of smog advisories in Toronto and Ontario.



## LEADERSHIP

### Develop a Plan

GRADE

F

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

To develop a comprehensive Air Quality Strategy for the City of Toronto that would:

- assess the progress of and integrate current air quality initiatives;
- set priorities for City action;
- set targets where they do not now exist;
- consider air emissions and their impacts;
- work with Toronto's business community;
- facilitate monitoring and reporting to the public.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The commitment to develop an Air Quality Strategy was made as part of the Environmental Plan, passed unanimously by Council on April 12, 2000. Three years later, Toronto still lacks a coherent plan for reducing air pollution because Council and senior staff haven't made this a priority. A study commissioned years ago on the policy and legal tools available to the City to address air pollution has yet to see the light of day.

This lack of a plan is hurting Toronto. If we had a coherent vision for reducing air pollution it is doubtful that Council would be moving forward on the expansion of the Island Airport. Expanding the Island Airport will:

- shift travellers out of trains and buses and into short-haul aircraft (the most polluting form of transportation);
- increase emissions of both smog-causing nitrogen oxides and cancer-causing air toxics such as formaldehyde, benzene and 1,3-butadiene;
- use public funds to subsidize high cost, highly polluting planes which serve only a few rather than affordable, effective public transit.

### Provide Adequate Resources for Clean Air Commitments

GRADE

F

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

Currently, no one really knows how much the City spends on smog-reduction. In 2000, the Toronto Atmospheric Fund calculated that Toronto spends \$0.77 per capita on smog and climate change measures, compared to \$1.29 per capita in Vancouver, \$1.63 in Ottawa and \$4.53 in Los Angeles.

Last year, the City Auditor singled out action on air pollution as an area which needs more secure funding, since the existing budget process has failed to finance the necessary programs and

investments in spite of the fact that air pollution has been identified as the most significant environmental and health risk to the City.<sup>7</sup>

In response to the Auditor's criticism, senior staff in Toronto developed a ranking system for environmental plan initiatives as part of the development of the City budget. While six clean air programs (which would have cost \$1,437,000) were deemed high priority items, only the \$500,000 for Green Power was funded by the City, through the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. Even this funding is far below what is required to achieve the City's green power target (see below).

The ranking exercise ultimately had little impact on the budget, as virtually all environmental programs were discarded from the budget because they are considered "new". Labeling a program new, even if it had prior Council approval, is the kiss of death in this tight budget era.

This is short-sighted, given that research has shown that the energy efficiency measures alone would save the City \$22 million per year in energy costs. The City is already saving \$13 million per year in fuel costs due to energy efficiency measures undertaken since 1990. The City should aggressively pursue these measures directly through its Office of Energy Efficiency and earmark the potential \$22 million in additional savings to new smog- and greenhouse gas reduction measures.<sup>8</sup>

## Work with Others

GRADE

B

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Develop smog-reducing legislation, policies, programs and partnerships with business, other levels of government, non-governmental organizations, individuals and international agencies.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The fourth Toronto Smog Summit took place in June 2003 and was marked by a significantly greater involvement and commitments by municipal governments from across the GTA. This expansion and deepening of the GTA Clean Air Council has been led by the Clean Air Partnership (an offshoot of the Toronto Atmospheric Fund) and they are to be congratulated for it. Unfortunately, there was little new from the federal and provincial governments.

The Medical Officer of Health's reports on air pollution and health, with recommendations for all three levels of government, have been excellent.

With the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and Council's long-standing commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by 20% relative to 1990 levels, we were hoping to see more collaboration with the federal government. Perhaps this coming year?

## Track Economic Benefits

GRADE

F

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Develop a Plan to monitor economic benefits that result from City's actions.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The City is not monitoring economic benefits of environmental actions and the City Auditor says

that he doesn't even have enough information to assess whether or to what extent City departments have met environmental goals.

The Ontario Medical Association has calculated that air pollution costs the Toronto economy at least \$128 million per year in lost productivity and that Toronto-area hospitals spend over \$150 million to treat the victims of air pollution.<sup>9</sup>

Many smog reduction measures will save money due to reduced fuel costs. Tracking reductions and the economic savings associated with them is vital, yet no such plan has been developed.

## Action on Smog Alert (and Blackout) Days

GRADE

C

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

On forecast smog days, the City reduce its own emissions by ensuring that City staff suspend the following polluting activities:

- pesticide spraying;
- the use of gasoline powered equipment (lawn mowers, leaf blowers, etc.);
- use of oil-based paints, solvents, cleaners and other volatile organic compound (VOC) emitting products;
- all non-essential vehicle use;
- street sweeping;
- re-fuelling for all non-essential vehicles, at least until after dark;
- all road re-surfacing activities;
- reset air conditioning units in municipal offices to warmer temperatures and allow staff to dress casually.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

During and immediately following the blackout of August 14, 2003, the City missed a major opportunity to promote long-term conservation through public outreach and example.

This summer wasn't as bad as 2001 or 2002 for the number of smog days, but it was still the third worst year for smog days in Toronto in the last decade (see table on p.4). Still, given that the most recent health studies show that there is no 'safe' level for the primary air pollutants, the emphasis must now be on reducing air pollution everyday. Rather than attempting to change behaviour only when a smog day is predicted, the City should:

- always use low-VOC paint;
- implement a Green Fleets strategy to reduce vehicle use;
- use increased parking revenues to subsidize employee transit passes;
- permanently reset air conditioning units and encourage staff to dress appropriately.

City Council is to be congratulated for passing the landmark Pesticide By-law, which will reduce emissions of smog-causing volatile organic compounds.

## TRANSIT AND TRIP REDUCTION

### Public Transit

GRADE

B

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Encourage the Toronto Transit Commission not to cut any more of their services.

Committed to funding 20% of public transit operating costs.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The TTC received a \$30 million dollar increase in its operating grant from the City, the first significant increase since amalgamation. On the downside, another fare increase came into effect in January 2003.

Toronto's public transit system receives less governmental support than any other major city in North America. Renewed investment and improved service on the TTC and other forms of public transit are a critical part of any smog reduction strategy.

After a decade of decline the TTC has finally developed a plan to improve transit in Toronto when the transit commission approved a Ridership Growth Strategy in March. The strategy represents a sharp and very positive departure from the 1990 to 2002 period when transit fares doubled while bus and streetcar service levels declined by 10% and 20% respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The Ridership growth strategy also avoids the trap of glitzy mega-projects. Instead the plan focuses on the basics of better service where demand is highest, and freezing or even rolling fares back.

The catch, as always, is who pays. To date no government has offered to put back any of the funding that was cut while Mike Harris was Premier. The incoming provincial government of Dalton McGuinty has promised the City a portion of the gas tax for transit, but this still won't be enough to improve service.

### Employee Trip Reduction (1)

GRADE

F

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Undertake a survey of employee travel patterns every two years, to facilitate emission reductions and evaluate employee trip reduction initiatives.

Develop and implement a program to reduce employee commuting emissions.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The 1998 travel pattern survey was analysed and released last year, but is now long out of date. No new survey has been undertaken and no program is in place, beyond an electronic intranet (staff-only) web-site for potential carpoolers, which isn't promoted.

The Employee Trip Reduction program remains on the backburner, primarily because there are no staff or other resources to develop or implement the necessary policies.

This is particularly regrettable, because a City-sponsored car-pooling, bike, transit and tele-commuting program could be a catalyst and provide central nodes for similar initiatives at nearby offices.

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## Employee Trip Reduction (2)

GRADE

C

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Develop with area employers a program to promote and facilitate smog-friendly commuting practices.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The City played a leadership role in establishing the successful Black Creek Regional Transportation Management Association ([www.bcrtna.org](http://www.bcrtna.org)). The BCRTMA was established in 2001 as a partnership between employers, local governments, transit agencies and non-profit groups in the North-West of Toronto.

Since then, however, progress has stalled. The City has applied for funding from the federal government to expand the Transportation Management Association concept in other parts of the City as well as in the broader GTA, but should move forward more aggressively on this initiative.

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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND GREEN POWER

### Energy Efficiency (1)

GRADE

D

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Increase energy efficiency in City operations and facilities by at least 15% by 2005.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The City has adopted an Energy Management Plan that will achieve less than 20% of their energy efficiency and green power targets. According to the Plan, the City will invest only \$4 million per year, in spite of the fact that there are at least \$40 million dollars worth of cost-effective projects currently available. By not acting more aggressively on its energy efficiency targets, the City is wasting money.<sup>11</sup>

In light of the recent black-out and the renewed emphasis on using less energy, the City should accelerate its retrofit program. Rapidly implementing the full \$40 million worth of efficiency upgrades would:

- reduce the City's energy bill by \$5 to \$8 million per year;
- cut greenhouse gas emissions by 17,200 tonnes, which would achieve one quarter of the City's CO<sub>2</sub> emission target of a 20% reduction from 1990 levels;

- create 800 local jobs;
- reduce the stress on Toronto's electricity transmission and distribution system and the need for a costly new transmission line, as the City is the largest user of electricity in Toronto and transmission corridors into the downtown are already near capacity.<sup>12</sup>

The City already saves \$13 million per year as a result of investments in energy efficiency made since 1990. With a 3 to 8 year payback on new investments, it is clear that failing to invest immediately in energy efficiency is short-sighted.

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## Energy Efficiency (2)

GRADE

F

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Encourage improved building design to increase energy efficiency and integrate environmentally-friendly techniques such as use of solar heating, waste heat recovery, green roofs, etc.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

One of the most short-sighted cut in this year's budget was the \$180,000 requested for ensuring that new buildings in Toronto would exceed the Ontario building code by at least 25%. This simple and relatively cheap initiative would have resulted in huge long-term savings in energy costs and less pollution.

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## Green Power

GRADE

D

### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Purchase 25% of electricity from Green Power sources (wind, solar, micro-hydro and landfill gases) by 2005.

### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The City's Energy Management Plan envisages purchasing only 5% of the electricity it uses from green power sources by 2005 and is currently contemplating making only a \$500,000 investment, through the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, in green power this year. While TEA supports the proposed approach of investing directly (or perhaps through the City-owned Toronto Hydro) in a green power facility, Council should return to its 25% green power commitment.

The City has also proposed using energy efficiency investments in place of its green power commitment. This is a flawed strategy for 3 reasons:

- the City already has an energy efficiency target and this would, in effect, involve double-counting the environmental benefits;
- the City should ensure that the energy it does use comes increasingly from clean, environmentally sustainable sources like the wind, the sun, small-scale hydro or methane from landfills;

- Toronto, and its wholly-owned company Toronto Hydro, is missing an opportunity to be a Canadian leader in the movement towards the new energy economy, which will dominate the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The City should use Enwave's Deep Lake Water Cooling project for air-conditioning City buildings.

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## FLEETS AND FUELS

### Green Fleets

GRADE

C

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Substitute currently used fuels with less polluting alternative fuels, increasing fuel efficiency and optimizing motor vehicle technology.

Evaluate adopting a Green Fleet target to reduce smog causing fleet emissions by 50% by 2005.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

Council is to be applauded for continuing its purchase of low-sulphur gasoline for City vehicles and for its purchase of (cleaner) on-road diesel for its off-road vehicles. The City has bought approximately 200,000 litres of 50% bio-diesel this year as part of a test project and bio-diesel will account for approximately 10% of the fuel consumed by the City's diesel vehicles.

With regards to cleaner vehicles, research undertaken by the Fleets Services division found that alternatively fuelled vehicles can reduce pollution and save on costs. Yet 6 years after agreeing to 'green' the City's fleet, less than 3% of the City's vehicles are cleaner, alternatively fuelled vehicles; the City currently owns 109 natural gas vehicles and 4 gas-electric hybrid vehicles.

Only 8 cleaner vehicles were bought last year. This is largely because the City's Green Fleet transition plan is still not yet developed, but the staff proposal for next year does include the purchase of 50 hybrid pick-up trucks and roughly 15 new natural gas vehicles.

These proposed purchases represent a significant advance over this year, but are still only a first step. The Fleets Services division maintains approximately 5,000 vehicles and will be replacing 930 vehicles over the next 3 years, so we need a plan to address the whole fleet. More also needs to be done to reduce vehicle-use and promote vehicle replacement with non-fossil-fuel-dependent forms of transportation.

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## BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIANS

### Cycling

GRADE

D

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Implement the Toronto Bike Plan, which will:

- double the number of bike trips in Toronto;
- decrease the number of bicycle collisions and injuries.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The Bikeway Network was modestly expanded in 2002, with 8 km of new bike lanes and 5 km of new and reconstructed trails. The Bikeway Network currently has 50 km of bike lanes and 135 km of trails with 18 km of new bike lanes and 7 km of new and reconstructed trails planned for 2003.

The implementation of the Bike Plan is in jeopardy, however, for the 2003 Bike Plan budget of \$1,547,000 is only 53% of the 2002 budget, and far below the \$4 to \$5 million per year necessary to fully implement the 10 year plan.

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### Walking

GRADE

A-

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Ensure that walking is a safe, comfortable and convenient form of urban travel.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

Council adopted the Toronto Pedestrian Charter on October 29, 2002 as a reminder to decision-makers, both in the City and in the community at large, that walking should be valued as the most sustainable of all forms of travel, and that it has enormous social, environmental and economic benefits for the city.

Having adopted this Charter, we now look forward to its implementation. The City has allocated \$2 million per year for 10 years to completing the essential missing links of sidewalks. The City has also allocated \$500,000 for studies on improving pedestrian-safe crossings.

Snow clearing and sidewalk maintenance still need work.

As another promising sign, Council also adopted a by-law limiting new drive-throughs in restaurants in residential areas, which will improve air quality (through less vehicle idling) and make the city more walkable. Shame on the restaurateur's association, Canadian Tire and the banks for challenging this by-law at the OMB.

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## PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### Education

GRADE

A

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Launch a public education campaign on smog.

Promote the City's actions and challenge Toronto businesses to follow suit.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

The City's educational campaign, *20/20 The Way to Cleaner Air* was launched in June 2002. It provides useful tools for individuals to reduce their smog-causing emissions at home and on the road and has been working well.

The Clean Air Partnership (an offshoot of the Toronto Atmospheric Fund) produced the second edition of the *Clean Air Consumers Guide* that went out to 675,000 area homes as an insert in the Toronto Star.

One of the most innovative initiatives this year was the anti-idling blitz, which involved actual enforcement of the anti-idling by-law coupled with community volunteers out in the street distributing informational brochures. The blitz received a lot of media attention and did a great job of raising awareness of the unnecessary dangers of idling.

This educational blitz, and others like it, should be repeated in the future.

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### Communications

GRADE

F

#### WHAT COUNCIL PROMISED

Develop a publicly accessible, manageable, and interpretable data base on air quality sources from beyond Toronto, ambient air quality within Toronto, and specific source problems within Toronto.

#### WHAT WAS ACTUALLY DONE IN 2003

This program was axed once again during the budget debate.

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# ENDNOTES

- 1 D. Pengelly et al., *Air Pollution Burden of Illness in Toronto*, (Toronto Public Health, May 2000).
- 2 Dr. John Last, Dr. Konia Trouton and Dr. David Pengelly, *Taking our Breath Away: The Health Effects of Air Pollution and Climate Change*, (The David Suzuki Foundation: October 1998).
- 3 C.A. Pope, R. Burnett, M. Thun, E. Calle, D. Krewski, K. Ito and G. Thurston, "Lung Cancer Cardiopulmonary Mortality and Long-Term Exposure to Fine Particulate Air Pollution", *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 2002).
- 4 California Air Resources Board. "Children's health study: part of the Long-Term Exposure Health Effects Research Program" Online: [www.arb.ca.gov/research/chs/chs.htm#asthma](http://www.arb.ca.gov/research/chs/chs.htm#asthma). Last updated 23 January 2002.
- 5 Ontario Medical Association, *The Illness Costs of Air Pollution in Ontario*, (OMA: June 2000).
- 6 Ontario Ministry of the Environment, *Air Quality in Ontario 2000*, (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2002).
- 7 City Auditor, "Environmental Issues and Audit Plan" (report to City of Toronto Audit Committee, May 30, 2002).
- 8 International Centre for Local Environmental Initiatives, *Opportunities for Budget Cost Savings in the City of Toronto's Corporate Facilities: A report prepared for the City of Toronto* (Toronto: April 2001).
- 9 Ontario Medical Association, *The Illness Costs of Air Pollution in Ontario*, (OMA: June 200).
- 10 Steve Munro and the Rocket Riders, *Transit's Lost Decade: How Paying more for Less is Killing Public Transit*, (Toronto: April 2002); available at [www.torontoenvironment.org/rocketriders](http://www.torontoenvironment.org/rocketriders)
- 11 An independent study done for the City found that the City could achieve its 15% target and save an additional \$22 million per year in energy costs for a one-time investment of between \$68 and \$106 million. See International Centre for Local Environmental Initiatives, *Opportunities for Budget Cost Savings in the City of Toronto's Corporate Facilities: A report prepared for the City of Toronto* (Toronto: April 2001). City staff reports use much lower estimates for potential energy savings (\$2.5 million in savings for every \$20 million invested in efficiency).
- 12 The Independent Electricity Monitoring Agency's most recent assessment found that, in the absence of a concerted effort to increase energy efficiency, Toronto will require a new high-voltage transmission line by 2006. For details, see *10 Year Outlook: An Assessment of the Adequacy of Generation and Transmission Facilities to Meet Future Electricity Needs in Ontario from January 2004 to December 2013*, (Independent Electricity Market Operator: March 31, 2003).

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