



Portlands Gas Plant Expansion

Frequently Asked Questions

Prepared by Toronto East Residents for Renewable Energy (TERRE)

What is the Portlands Gas Plant (a.k.a the Portlands Energy Centre)?

The Portlands Gas Plant burns fossil gas to create electricity. It came online in 2009 despite much opposition from Toronto politicians and citizens. It was called “The Mistake by the Lake.” In 2022, it produced as much greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution as 133,000 cars. The plant’s current generating capacity is 550 megawatts (MW) of electricity and its owner wants to expand the plant by another 50 MW.

Who owns and operates the Portlands Gas Plant?

Atura Power owns and operates Portlands. Atura Power is a subsidiary of Ontario Power Generation, which is a Crown corporation owned by the Province of Ontario (a.k.a. the taxpayer).

Where is the Portlands Gas Plant located?

The plant is on the Toronto waterfront in the east end of Toronto. Located on Unwin Avenue at the base of Eastern Avenue, the plant is directly south of the Leslieville and Riverdale neighbourhoods, west of the Beaches neighbourhood, and adjacent to the Leslie Street Spit.

What is “natural” gas?

More aptly called fossil gas, it is a fossil fuel composed largely of methane (CH₄), a potent greenhouse gas (GHG). Methane leaks into the atmosphere when fossil gas is extracted, produced, and transported. GHGs – the primary contributors to the climate crisis – are released when fossil gas is burned.

What emissions are released by the Portlands Gas Plant?

- **Greenhouse Gases - CH₄ & Carbon Dioxide:** The Portlands Gas Plant is the largest emitter of GHGs in Toronto, and the 4th largest in the Greater Toronto Area. Since Doug Ford became Premier, GHG pollution from the Portlands plant has increased 550%.
- **Nitrous Oxides (NO_x):** These air pollutants contribute to smog and human health conditions including asthma and other respiratory illnesses for local residents and workers. The Portlands Gas Plant is the #1 emitter of NO_x in Toronto.

How often is the Portlands Gas Plant being run currently to produce electricity?

First promoted as a “peaker” plant that would run at less than 15% capacity, its production has increased 550% over the last 5 years, operating an average of 14 hours a day over the past year. This summer, the plant operated most days for 21 hours a day, at 87.5% of capacity. The Portlands Gas Plant is expected to increase operations as Ontario’s nuclear power plants reduce output for maintenance. *Portlands has become a baseload power plant, rather than a peaker plant as originally intended.*

What is the Ontario Government's current proposal for the Portlands Gas Plant?

In addition to the expanded reliance on Portlands as a baseload source of power, the government is proposing to expand the plant's capacity by 50 megawatts. Atura Power and the Ontario Government are trying to market this costly expansion as an "efficiency upgrade." However, with this expansion, the plant's output will be ramped up and Portlands will continue to operate until at least 2034 and likely beyond (its original shutdown date was 2029). This expansion will undermine the federal goal of net-zero by 2035 and Toronto's climate targets, worsen air pollution in Toronto, and increase Ontario's climate impacts on people and the environment. In addition to ramping up Portlands and other gas plants in the province, Ontario has not contracted for any new solar or wind projects during the last 5 years.

What is the role of the Federal Government in this issue?

The federal government has jurisdiction over GHG emissions. They can stop Ontario's planned 700% gas ramp up by implementing strong Clean Electricity Regulations that will stop the construction of new gas plants and phase-out existing ones. This is vital to Canada meeting its international climate targets.

Who is the Toronto East Residents for Renewable Energy (TERRE) coalition?

We are a coalition of East End residents and local climate justice groups working together to oppose the expansion of the polluting Portlands gas plant in our neighbourhood, and to ensure its phase out by 2030. We are committed to supporting a rapid, just transition to renewable energy in Toronto and across Ontario. Coalition members include local citizens and the following groups: ClimateFast, Climate Voice, Environmental Defence Canada, For Our Kids Toronto, Ontario Clean Air Alliance (OCAA), Ontario Climate Emergency Campaign (OCEC), Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!), Toronto East End Climate Collective (TEECC), and Toronto 350.

How do I learn more about TERRE?

To receive updates and join the campaign, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/TERRE-SignUp>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TorontoEastResidentsRenewableEnergy/>

#GlobalPowerUp #PowerUp #NoMoreGasPlants #onpoli



Sources:

~ Marco Chown Oved & Andrew Bailey, "Ontario gas plants were supposed to run only during peak periods. Instead they're running most of the time, polluting the air you breathe" *Toronto Star*, October 1.

~ Environmental Defence fact sheet on Portlands - <https://environmentaldefence.ca/nomoregasplants/>

~ Ontario Clean Air Alliance - various FAQs & Reports - <https://www.cleanairalliance.org/campaigns/gas/>

~ The Atmospheric Fund - <https://taf.ca/a-tale-of-two-cities-what-we-learned-from-recent-gas-plant-proposals/>

~ Clean Energy Canada - <https://cleanenergycanada.org/report/a-renewables-powerhouse/>

~ Royal Bank of Canada - <https://thoughtleadership.rbc.com/power-shift-how-ontario-can-cut-its-450b-electricity-bill/>

