March 6, 2012

Dear friends:

For those of you who do not read French, you may still enjoy seeing some of the coverage from yesterday's occupation of Quebec Premier Jean Charest's Office by Greenpeace activists.

The activists are calling on the government to permanently shut down Quebec's only operating nuclear reactor, which cannot continue running anyway without a massive "rebuilding" of the core of the reactor, estimated to cost at least $2 billion.

A similar "refurbishment" was recently carried out in New Brunswick, and the project ended up three years behind schedule and a couple of billion dollars over budget (one billion in direct costs and one billion for replacement power).

Safety issues, problems of radioactive pollution, lack of any detailed planning for large volumes of highly radioactive "refurbishment wastes", opportunity costs vis-a-vis investing in energy efficiency and renewables -- all these aspects have received a lot of coverage in the Quebec media.

We are hopeful that Quebec may be the first jurisdiction in North America to become nuclear-free. (Quebec has had a moratorium on new nuclear reactors since 1978!!)

The cartoon [see link on Beyond Nuclear website] has Charest saying,

"It's gonna be safe! Gentilly-2 will be rebuilt by Quebec engineers using Quebec concrete!"

and his assistant, aware of all the scandalous infrastructure problems in Montreal, with bridges falling apart and concrete overpasses collapsing, -- including a big chunk of concrete that just fell garage of the Olympic Stadium -- says

"Psst! This might not be the best time...."

The Parti Québécois is against the refurbishment of Gentilly-2, and even the Quebec government says that nuclear has no long-term future in the province. Those who are in favor of the refurbishment are finding it harder and harder to make their case....
We should know the outcome in a few weeks or months.

Gordon Edwards.