

WWF Canada hopeful for April climate change plan

Although the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada was hoping to see more money earmarked to deal with climate change in the March 22 Ontario budget, a spokesperson for the organization says the WWF is waiting on the province's April climate change plan.

"It really is pretty minimalistic," says Julia Langer, director of the global threats program at WWF Canada. Langer is referring to the \$51.4 million announced in the budget for investment in research and innovation for Ontario's automotive sector. These investments are aimed at easing greenhouse emissions.

The government's climate change plan is expected to include a budget for hundreds of millions to be spent on addressing climate change concerns.

"Hopefully there will be more investment next month when there is a climate change plan promised," Langer says.

Langer notes that government spending needs to be coupled with laws to help protect Ontarians from the threat of climate change. Strict regulations, she says, is the key to dealing with the concern of greenhouse gas emissions.

"You just can't spend your way out of a climate change crisis," she adds. "(There needs to be) investment and regulations."

Langer says the WWF would like to see spending from the utilities budget redirected into funding to address climate change. Although the McGuinty government has promised to close Ontario's four coal-fired electric plants by 2014, Langer says the government needs to curb spending on coal-burning facilities.

“Stop spending billions and billions ... on coal plants and reinvest it in energy conservation and renewable sources such as wind, geothermal solar,” Langer says. “This is what people like.”

Langer adds that she would have liked to have seen some of the \$1.7 billion allocated to fund Ontario’s highways diverted into funding public transportation. She characterizes the transportation budget as an “unbalanced equation.”

“It is interesting to see the bulk of spending on highways and not on public transit,” she says.