

Cooling-tower plan will negatively affect economy, health

As we read the proposal that Indian Point will be forced to build \$2 billion cooling towers, we were aghast. The impact of this proposal on the health of our community, both medical and economic, is significant and negative.

As CEOs of organizations that are large employers, large consumers of energy, and dedicated to the health of our communities, we feel the need to speak out.

Were Indian Point forced to shut down to build cooling towers, the air pollution that will be created by burning imported fossil fuels to replace this electrical generating capacity will negatively affect the health of our residents. Cancer of the lung and bronchus is the single largest cause of cancer deaths for both women and men in New York state.

How can the state Department of Environmental Conservation rationalize adding more air pollution, and consequently, more cases of lung cancer?

The negative economic impact is devastating. According to a recent newspaper article, Consolidated Edison is the most expensive major power company in the "lower 48." Its customers pay the highest monthly bills. Closing Indian Point will drive our electric rates to more than three times the national average. Our local economy is struggling. Driving up the cost of electricity is not acceptable to anyone.

As hospitals, we are facing substantial reductions in reimbursement due to national health reform and recently announced state cuts to health care.

We currently spend more than \$1.5 million per year on electricity — imagine how much that will increase if an additional 2,000 megawatts of our power came from imported oil or gas? Hospitals are community organizations — when our expenses are driven up at the same time that reimbursement is being reduced, service reductions can be the only outcome. And that, just like air pollution, is bad for the health of our communities.

We are all concerned about our environment, but the environment includes children, women and men, in addition to fish, their hatchlings, and eggs (which the DEC says it wishes to protect). Damaging our economy, and our lungs, is not the right thing to do.

We urge the government to accept the compromise that has been offered. Why not try the wedgewire screens — Indian Point's preferred technology for reducing the plants' environmental toll on the Hudson River — that are already in use upriver and evaluate their effectiveness before you threaten our only nonpolluting, low-cost source of critically important energy.

The health of our residents is at stake.

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