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**PICKERING NUCLEAR BEGINS SCHEDULED OUTAGE***Vacuum Building inspection a regulatory requirement*

Durham Region: Unit 1 at Ontario Power Generation's Pickering Nuclear Station will be taken out of service today as the station begins a routine but highly complex inspection of its vacuum building. Over the next few days the remaining five operating units also will be taken offline.

The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) requires that the vacuum buildings at Pickering be inspected every 10 years. This requires the shutdown of all the nuclear units linked to the vacuum building.

The timing of the inspection is co-ordinated with the Independent Electricity System Operator to minimize the impact on the supply of electricity in Ontario. Spring is chosen because electricity demand is lower than in the summer or winter.

During the shut down more than 1,900 additional staff will be on site to assist the 2,730 regular station personnel. In all, they will perform 40,000 tasks related to the vacuum building inspection and maintenance.

The shutdown of the units follows months of detailed planning. Work crews have been rehearsing the more complicated tasks on mock ups of the work area. This detailed approach to planning and implementation is a major part of OPG's project management. It was a key stage in the successful completion of last year's vacuum building outage at the Darlington Nuclear station.

At Pickering, Units 4, 5, 6 and 7 are expected to be back in service in six to eight weeks. Units 1 and 8 will remain out of service for an extended period as part of their scheduled maintenance programs.

The vacuum building is a safety feature that is unique to Candu technology. The interior of the circular building is kept at a pressure level close to a vacuum. Ducts link it to the operating nuclear units.

In the extremely unlikely event of an accident, the resulting steam would be drawn into the vacuum building where it would be contained and doused with water. This would prevent the release of radioactive material to the environment. Pickering A and B share one vacuum building, which is why both stations will be taken out of service.

In 2009 Pickering Nuclear produced 12 per cent of the province's electricity. OPG recently announced it would invest \$300 million for the continued operation of the station.

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For more information contact  
Ontario Power Generation  
Media Relations  
(416) 592-4008 or 1-877-592-4008