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## **Municipal coalition joins fight against nuclear power**

Quebec urged to mothball Gentilly-2 plant

By JAN RAVENSBERGEN

With 3,500 participants converging in Montreal for an international energy-development congress that begins tomorrow, environmental activists took advantage yesterday of the strategic moment in the evolving public debate over energy.

Mayor Gaetan Ruest of Amqui announced that 255 municipalities and regional municipal governments across the province have formally backed a demand that Quebec pull the plug on nuclear energy once and for all.

Hydro-Quebec should mothball its Gentilly-2 nuclear reactor, the sole operating reactor in the province, instead of rebuilding it, said Ruest, who has been spearheading a campaign launched in the spring of 2009.

The campaign is kicking into a higher gear, he told a full-day forum of Quebec environmental activists. Copies of the anti-Gentilly-2 resolution, which has been adopted by 194 municipalities and 29 regional municipal bodies, were presented to three opposition members of the Quebec National Assembly who endorse it : Parti Québécois MNAs Scott McKay and Martine Ouellet, and Amir Khadir of Quebec solidaire. Another 32 regional municipal bodies have passed resolutions opposing uranium mining, Ruest said.

The thick stack of resolutions will be tabled in the full legislature "at the right moment" to be chosen by the three MNAs after the assembly reconvenes Sept. 21, Ruest said.

"There are another 1,250 municipalities to go," Ruest told reporters at a news conference held in conjunction with the full-day forum, which focused on two themes. They covered the anti-nuclear initiative in the morning and, during an intensive afternoon session, emerging issues including vigorous opposition to controversial plans to conduct shale-gas exploration and production in the province.

The forum was just before a four-day meeting beginning this weekend in Montreal called the World Energy Congress. The international event is held every three years by energy companies, oil and gas industry groups, governments and universities.

Forum participants hope to draw a large number of demonstrators to a protest rally scheduled for 2 p.m. tomorrow at the Palais des congrès downtown, where the international event will be centred. "Don't want their dirty energy ? Neither do we !" declared a flyer inviting participation. It carried group names that included a Quebec citizens coalition actively opposing shale-gas development, Nature Quebec, Greenpeace and a range of other environmental groups.

Public-opinion polls show almost two-thirds of Quebecers are opposed to a plan by Hydro-Quebec to rebuild Gentilly-2, said Michel Duguay, a nuclear physicist at Université Laval who co-ordinates Mouvement Sortir le Québec du Nucléaire, the umbrella group that speaks on the issue on behalf of about 85 environmental groups.

Ontario is backing off nuclear power generation of the Canadian-developed CANDU variety, Duguay said, adding that Quebec has a golden opportunity to follow that example.

Hydro-Quebec has said refurbishment of the Gentilly-2 reactor in Becancour, near Trois Rivières, will cost \$1.9 billion, although Duguay said that with waste-management costs included, "the real price will be in the \$8-billion range."

Hydro-Quebec had originally planned to begin to rebuild it next March — although that target date has apparently been delayed until March 2012.

The utility has not yet obtained regulatory approval, Duguay said.