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Queen's Park Bureau Chief

David Suzuki, Canada's most famous environmentalist, is urging Ontarians to re-elect Premier Dalton McGuinty this fall to save the Liberals' "groundbreaking" green energy policies.

In an exclusive interview with the *Star*, Suzuki made a rare foray into partisan politics, warning it is "absolute insanity" for Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak to want to scrap wind and solar power initiatives that the Tories claim are too expensive.

"I don't get it, because it's a job creator — I would have thought that the Conservatives would be banging away at the need to create jobs," the host of CBC's *The Nature of Things* said during a stroll with McGuinty in Stanley Park on Wednesday.

"Ontario right now is a leader in North America. Why would anybody come in and throw that out the window? It doesn't make any sense."

Suzuki expressed concern at Hudak's pledge to kill the "feed-in tariff" subsidy program that promotes green electricity generation by enabling farmers and other producers to sell hydro, wind, and solar power to the grid.

The Tories, who lead in public-opinion polls, blame McGuinty's Green Energy Act and the 13 per cent harmonized sales tax for rising hydro bills.

If they win the Oct. 6 election, they would also scrap the 25-year, \$437-million deal with Samsung that should see the South Korean firm invest \$7 billion in Ontario.

"I don't know what Mr. Hudak's idea is, but energy costs are going to rise in the future," Suzuki said, noting demand is only increasing with new household electronics and, eventually, widespread use of electric cars.

"I'm offering an endorsement of what Mr. McGuinty has done, absolutely. This is a great plan. Any party would be foolish to talk about abandoning it," he said, noting the David Suzuki Foundation works closely with the government on promoting energy conservation.

Suzuki also hailed McGuinty for enacting a pesticide ban and for his work on protecting the boreal forest, though he chided the premier for continuing Ontario's reliance on nuclear power and for refusing to implement a carbon tax.

The premier, for his part, said he was "really honoured" by Suzuki's endorsement on the eve of the Council of the Federation meeting of provincial and territorial leaders here.

"This has been a challenge for us in some parts of Ontario so when David lends his support to our initiatives it's very meaningful," he said.

"Just as we're the number one auto producer in North America, I've got this vision for us to be a powerful player in the North American economy. You want wind turbines? Nobody makes them better than we do in Ontario. You want solar panels? We've got the expertise, we've got the manufacturing capacity."

The Liberals hope to create 50,000 green energy jobs by the end of next year. So far, about 13,000 jobs are up and running.

While Suzuki, who grew up in London, Ont., lives in British Columbia, he took a break from his summer vacation to come back to Vancouver to meet with McGuinty.

"I'm very, very admiring of what he's done," said the man who finished fifth in CBC's 2004 nationwide search for *The Greatest Canadian*, behind Tommy Douglas, Terry Fox, Pierre Trudeau and Sir Frederick Banting.



David Suzuki and Premier Dalton McGuinty take a stroll in Vancouver's Stanley Park on Wednesday. Suzuki is urging Ontarians to re-elect McGuinty this fall to save the Liberals' "groundbreaking" green energy policies.

CHRISTINE MCAVOY/FOR THE TORONTO STAR

"I live about half my time in Ontario and I still think of myself as an Ontario guy."

That's why he felt it was important to inject himself into an election that will be closely fought by McGuinty, Hudak and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath.

"The big thing to me is the Green Energy Act," said Suzuki.

"It has created jobs. For me it says we've got a future that's bright with job creation and we can drop our dependence on fossil fuels."