



Screening at the University of Toronto  
Event Report  
March 13, 2013

On Wednesday, March 13th, the Institute for Sustainable Energy (ISE) presented a screening of the award-winning documentary *Switch*. The film addresses worldwide energy production and consumption, and looks at ways that we might transition to a sustainable energy future. Students and faculty from across the University attended the screening at the Innis Town Hall.

#### **SCREENING FACILITATOR**

**Professor David Sinton**, Director  
Institute for Sustainable Energy  
University of Toronto

Professor David Sinton, Director at the Institute for Sustainable Energy facilitated an open conversation with all of those that attended the screening. There was no separate panel. Comments were made by faculty members and students in attendance from a variety of backgrounds.

Viewers appreciated that the film takes a realistic approach to the challenges of energy production and the switch to less carbon-intensive fuels, by framing it against a backdrop of very high energy demand.

The film does a good job of showing the sheer enormity of our current energy infrastructure, and in doing so helps shed some light on why coal-powered generation is not easily shut down. The coal mining and processing footage was informative. Footage of gas-fired power plants would have been interesting as this source of electricity is an already substantial and growing part of the mix in North America.

The metric used in the film, calculating how many people each energy source can power, is misleading. It makes an energy-intensive lifestyle the norm, and in doing so doesn't question individual lifestyle choices or regional differences.

Viewers felt that the film failed to significantly address conservation and energy efficiency measures which could substantially lower energy demand.

The film concentrates almost exclusively on mature technologies, and only concentrates on higher profile sustainable energy sources. More could have been said about energy storage as well. Likewise there was insufficient attention paid to energy grids and their role.

The film does not address any role of entrenched business interests in maintaining the reliance upon carbon-heavy energy sources. Is the failure to move quickly to renewable energy sources a question of technology, infrastructure, economics or politics?

The film makes no real mention of policy and the role of government. It suggests change is needed, but pays minimal attention to drivers of change, either political or cultural. It focuses instead on fairly low key changes the individual can make, without discussion about the huge role that industry plays in the demand for cheap energy.