Michael J. Sepcot
Ethics in Engineering
Dr. Vivian Weil
December 4, 2003

Indian Point Energy Center

The Indian Point nuclear reactors are a vital part of the New York power grid supplying up to 11% of the state's electrical power. With the economic consequences associated with the closing of the plant taken into consideration, I represent the sole dissenting view in my group. I feel Indian Point should remain in operation until such time that a refueling of the plant is needed in which all problems could then be addressed. Closing Indian Point immediately to take care of the Emergency Core Cooling System (ECCS) problem would only further hurt an economy which is struggling to recover from the impact of the events which unfolded in September 2001.

The proven record of nuclear power plants safety in recent times has given me assurance that the likeliness of an event requiring the pumping of water from the reserve basement during an ECCS failure is extremely unlikely and should not be a public concern. In the growing number of years since nuclear power plants became operational, we have witnessed only 8 ECCS problems, none of which required the pumping of water from the reserve basement. The problem associated with Indian Point has to do with the size of the containment screen. The containment screen can act as a filter in which paint chips and other debris will begin to build up on the screen, further preventing the filtering of removed coolant water. The larger the containment screen, the more containment there can be in the water before the screen is completely clogged and the rate at which water is removed is slowed to dangerous levels causing what is known as ECCS failure. I fully acknowledge the seriousness nature of this situation, there are millions of people living within a 50 mile range of the Indian Point Plant and the lives of this people are put

in danger in the event of an ECCS failure occurring. But the history of this plant, having been in operation since the early 1970s, and the unlikely event of having an ECCS problem, 8 times is recent history, I do not feel this problem is in need of immediate action. Every nuclear power plant is scheduled for shutdown during the time of refueling. I think with the proven track record of nuclear power plants not having to rely on the basement reservoir in the very few times ECCS problems have occurred is a good enough reason to delay the closure of the plant to expand the containment screen.

New York is continuously more and more power, and power shortages and blackouts are regularly happening in the summer months. Even in the wake of the September 11 attacks and the post recession economy, the citizens of New York are using increasingly more power. During the summer months of 2002, there were rolling blackouts due to New Yorkers lack of effort to cut back on energy usage and the increased general use of air conditioners in what was a scorching summer. In fact, there were an alarming number of fires and explosions in power plants generating electricity through the use of fossil fuels that makes me wonder which method of generation is indeed the safer. 2003 brought even more trouble when lightning striking a water power plant in Canada shut down the East Coast power grid.

With all of the economic downfalls expected with the closing of Indian Point Plants, I feel it is in the public's best interest to wait for the scheduled refueling time before attacking the containment screen problems in the plants. One needs to weigh the costs associated with the closing of the plants against the dangers of keeping them open. With the reasons mentioned within, I feel Indian Point should remain open and in operation until said time in which the refueling is scheduled. As mentioned, a serious

situation can build out of the containment screens being too small, NRC and Entergy have acknowledged the problem does indeed exists at Indian Point and a schedule has already been set for the problem to be resolved. The opponents of Indian Point need to re-examine the situation at hand before petitioning the closure of a major supplier of energy.