

Submitted to the MOE
During the GEA comment period
June 22, 2009

Like many rural Ontario residents, I was eager to hear what noise and setback regulations the MOE would propose pursuant to the Green Energy Act. The original media rush (i.e. CBC: "Ontario proposes tough new wind turbine rules") was promising. You can imagine my disappointment when, after looking into the details of the proposed rules, I discovered that for larger projects the rules haven't changed in any material way.

The final measure of how well the Ontario government is performing its most important task - protecting its citizens - is the results on the ground. And so far these results are disappointing. Out of the seven large wind energy projects in Ontario, six have had enough complaints to make the media. Even at setbacks of 700 metres the level of distress your rules have allowed is nothing short of scandalous. How can you, in good conscience, continue to claim there's no "scientific evidence" of problems when you steadfastly refuse to look?

I have to wonder, just who are you listening to? What efforts have you gone through to validate your studies? Have you made any effort to listen to the truly heartbreaking stories of those affected? Have you spent just a week living amongst your creations? Have you even set up a meter to find out just how loud the turbines really are? Have you conducted your own survey of those living close to a project?

As far as I can tell, honest answers to all the above are unsatisfactory.

Before the advent of wind turbines Ontario's noise regulations were reasonably protective. Sadly, the MOE seems unwilling to either apply or enforce them for the wind energy industry. The combination of (1)allowing 40dB, (2)not enforcing even this limit, and (3)relying on models that allow easy circumvention will predictably lead to a continuation of the horror stories we've been hearing from the projects.

A better plan would be to lower the limit to a defensible 35dB (there's no question that is what NPC-232 and NPC-104 call for), provide for an enforcement and complaint process, and hold the developers and consultants to their promised noise levels. Only with these steps will you demonstrate your commitment to protecting Ontario's rural citizens.

If you are determined to proceed with the wind energy program using there proposed rules, in spite of there being no real-world evidence that it lowers carbon emissions, then at the very least you should make funds available to buy out those who are affected. If wind energy is so important to Ontario's future, then the funds should be forthcoming. To foist these very large costs onto those who just happen to live in the neighborhood is unconscionable.