

Wind Power

Posted 3 days ago To the Editor,

I would like to thank The Signal Star for helping to provide a forum for the very contentious issue of Industrial Wind development in Huron County and beyond. This is certainly the largest single issue the county will have to face in the next 20 to 40 years. Looking at the proposed wind developments that extends pretty much from Sarnia to part way up the Bruce Peninsula this is huge. Is it a good thing?

When you stand back I think it's a matter of asking two questions. First it's a question of is industrial wind development the best way for Ontario to address the challenge of providing clean reliable affordable energy. We actually have a remarkably good energy supply. As I write this, nuclear is providing almost half our power. Water 22%, natural gas 23%, coal 3% (yes only 3%) and wind 1.5%. It would take a Canadian would feel inadequate about that.

Germany and Denmark are held up by the wind developers and naïve environmentalists as something to emulate because they have so many turbines. Germany burns coal for 60% of its power, is currently putting 22 more coal plants on line and concedes their wind development has not saved one gram of CO2 emissions. They are saying that even in Germany where they use ½ the electricity per capita than we do, that conservation and efficiency is the far better way to spend the money. What is stopping them from redirecting that money? The wind industry and the green perception around it, is too politically powerful.

Denmark is a nation that provides 20% of its power from wind. They also burn coal for 42% and also have much higher emissions than we do. The rest is imported as hydro (water) from Norway and nuclear from Sweden. They end up having to export half of the uncontrollable wind at a loss to Norway. Then they buy it back when the wind slows down. Even with the small amount of wind we have on line now we are having to pay Quebec and New York to take our excess, when wind is high and demand low. Not surprisingly Denmark has the highest electricity costs and taxation levels in the EU.

Please consider the real environmental carnage from the large number of turbines to be erected along migratory routes and shorelines. The Ontario study that was just released showed an average of 13 birds/ turbine/year being killed, with a similar number of bats. That's not even close to the number of 1 to 2 that the wind industry religiously touts. And what's being killed are not crows and starlings but Eagles, Red Tail hawks, Ospreys, Harriers, Kestrels, vultures, and threatened species like Bobolinks and Chimney Swifts. Syncrude was recently fined \$800,000 for killing 1600 ducks in tailings ponds in Alberta. Transalta the wind development where the study was done on Wolfe Island killed over 2000 birds and bats in one year, claimed it was just slightly higher than the industry standard and was fined \$0.

Toss in the fact that if they do put the 10,000 turbines that a writer suggested last week would likely go on agricultural land, then we will then lose close to 40,000 acres of mostly prime farm land from production. If you look at the project maps of development moving ahead in Ontario it averages about 4 acres/turbine for roads and pads, not (again) the 1 to 2 that the developers suggest.

It should be clear to anyone whose vision is not clouded by dreams of money that industrial wind is not a rational choice given our situation in Ontario now. I could throw in a few more issues like the fact our peak loads are now in the summer and wind is useless then, and the fact that the long term projection for low natural gas prices makes expensive low benefit winter wind production even dumber.

But for the sake of argument....what if we say....lets just do it anyway? Then my second question would be "would you do it the way Ontario is doing it now"? The commendable part of wind development in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands is, they tried to spread the revenue around, including to the people who had to live with them. Most wind development in rural areas of Europe are smaller in size and scope than what we are heading towards. Denmark was the model for development with 80% of ownership being in the hands of individuals or cooperatives. Farmers joined farmers and with the gov'ts help they erected their own. Small <25kw point of use turbines were also encouraged, just as PEI is doing now.

Regional Planning was considered and areas that were deemed too important to tourism or natural areas were excluded. Even today with 75% citizen ownership in Denmark, their national wind developer DONG has decided no more onshore wind turbines, citing too many conflicts. The only significant wind developments being planned are "over the horizon off-shore". They have an economy based around exporting wind turbines, they actually own most of them and still they want them out of site and away from where they live.

So what does Ontario's approach look like? Exclusive ownership by energy industry corporations. No local input over siting or planning issues or even the number of turbines. The lowest cost to developer method of acquiring access to land, that actually intends to divide communities. Turbine revenues that go to the smallest number of local people possible. Setbacks that curiously match the developer's needs but use no apparent science to protect health and safety. Very high density turbine placement in populated areas. No method of compensation for loss of property value for those caught inside these developments. A cap on the amount of taxes the developer needs to pay to the municipality to about 1/20th the real value for a turbine. Twenty year contracts for expensive non-dispatchable electricity whether we need it online or not.

There is a side of me that wants to believe that what happened was well intentioned but not well considered. Perhaps there was just a lack of critical judgement by people in positions of power, and some forceful and misleading industry advice.

What I think actually happened though was a too cozy relationship between Gov't and very large energy sector corporations. I've been amazed at how badly the rural areas have been treated with the Green Energy Act, but judging by the ad campaigns from the Province and wind industry lobby, rather than being brave and saying "we goofed", and to the developers "sorry things have changed" I think they are going to try to bull their way through by convincing the gullible it's a wonderful thing and reap what rewards the corporate wind industry will provide. Rural areas negatively affected will be considered collateral damage, unfortunately I think in a war on the public interest.

If you have concerns, speak out now.

Sincerely,

Robert Budd

Goderich