

# Nature defeated

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It is often said there are always two sides to any story. And generally I believe this to be true. But after five years in this chair I continue to strain to hear or comprehend the argument for wind energy—I have failed to hear a persuasive argument that explains why we had to ruin Wolfe Island and why we must do the same to Prince Edward County. I am still waiting.

I am in the business of listening. I'd like to believe I remain open-minded and I am prepared to change my mind if presented with evidence that windmills do anything more than appease those who insist "we must do something."

A five hour public meeting, though a valuable bit of public process, offered no such evidence. Instead the proponents for wind energy simply want something done. And done now. Before it is too late. Because we are at the tipping point. The planet is in crisis. Our species must fix it. (The other organisms on this rock must surely be looking at each other nervously, thinking "this could work. The humans have done a great job so far.")

The prowind energy arguments presented last Wednesday fall into one of essentially three categories. First is the landowner/farmer seeking to get a share of the money being spilled by a government intoxicated by its compulsion to appear green. I get this argument. If the government is bent on throwing away money, I don't begrudge anyone putting out their hands. But doling out taxpayer's dollars to landowners through large development companies isn't an argument for the necessity of wind energy.

The other arguments heard last week revolved mostly around the prevailing view that climate change/global warming is bad, and that coal and nuclear generated electricity pose a risk to society in terms of health and sustainability. And therefore something must be done.

The massive hole in the argument is that no one bothers to show how 40-storey industrial wind turbines do anything to diminish or mitigate these perceived threats. No one draws the link between the giant fans obliterating the natural horizon, and how they will fix climate change or reduce the planet's dependence on coal or nuclear energy. For nowhere in the world has wind energy displaced coal or nuclear or made a measurable impact on reducing carbon emissions.

Though they've been indulging in the 'doing something' delusion of wind for more than two decades Europe is just as dependent on coal and nuclear as it ever was—perhaps more so. For Europe is building 50 new coal plants in the next decade. France has recently introduced a new carbon tax, hailing itself as green in advance of a December

conference on climate change in Copenhagen. But France's carbon tax won't apply to electricity because 80 per cent of its electricity is generated by nuclear power.

The bottom line is that despite two decades of outrageously subsidized and expensive wind energy, Europe has not reduced carbon emissions by a single gram.

So the job for those who insist on compromising the quality of place in Prince Edward County, or for those who feel that this successful economic engine must be extinguished for the sake of the planet, is to draw the link. You must show us where wind energy is working to reduce dependence on coal and nuclear energy. You must point us to the jurisdiction that has successfully and unambiguously reduced its carbon emissions due to wind energy. It is simply not enough to point to problems and insist we do something. A lot of bad things happen in the name of expediency. Ask the 8 million folks in the Indian subcontinent who were coerced into being sterilized in 1976 by their government, seeking to appease the world consensus that population growth would soon mean the end of life as we know it.

The unsettling bit in both the population scare of the '70s and the climate change angst of today is the presumption that humans have triumphed over nature. That we've won. Our species has evolved to the point where we now have the wherewithal, the wisdom and the might to overcome nature—all that's missing is the collective will.

There is something astonishingly arrogant and naïve, and a bit frightening, in this belief. The folks in Rednersville can't get the potholes in their road fixed but somehow our government is going to fix the weather?

Well, maybe. But first you need a better argument than: we must do something.