

Throwing caution to the wind

Dear editor:

As a physician, I also share with Mayor MacIver of Amaranth concerns regarding health issues not only associated with industrial wind turbines but the 230 kv line that DWPI wishes to install. Actually many of these concerns were expressed in my brief to the Ministry of Environment last winter and subsequently to the Environmental Review Tribunal (ERT) last fall regarding the DWPI project.

It defies reason that the provincial authorities have approved this project (and others) while there is an ongoing federal health study regarding possible adverse health affects of industrial wind turbines. As Mayor MacIver points out, there is ample evidence on the adverse health effects from the electromagnetic fields associated with high voltage lines.

Much of my presentation to the ERT last fall focused on the precautionary principle alluded to by Mayor MacIver. In Canada, we unfortunately have many examples of where the precautionary principle has been ignored. Last July, we witnessed an example with catastrophic consequences ? Lac Magantic. The railway company involved allegedly made a special application to have only 1 person managing their freight trains (as a precaution, a minimum of 2 apparently had been legislated). It apparently was argued by the company lawyers that railway accidents are relatively rare and there was no scientific proof that reducing the size of the crew to one (1) would increase the probability of an accident. The guidelines respecting staffing levels of freight trains carrying hazardous materials have already been changed.

Yes, DWPI is storming ahead with construction. Yes, these turbines are being erected in a rural environment but it is a populated rural environment. Already there are other jurisdictions that have enacted residential setbacks that are multiples of what is legislated in Ontario as a result of appreciated concerns. The precautionary principle ? is it not logical to have a moratorium on the installation of wind farms in Ontario until we have the results of the federal health study? Are we going to witness yet another example where harm will occur because the precautionary principle was ignored?

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