

Mayors concerned about DWPI stray voltage

Recently elected Mayors Ken Bennington of Shelburne and Darren White of Melancthon were faced with new issues regarding Dufferin Wind Power Inc. (DWPI) in their first two weeks of office. Citizen concerns about alleged stray voltage from DWPI turbine transmission lines in Melancthon that lit up a 10 foot fluorescent light bulb on 3rd line prompted further investigation on the line where it picks up, above ground, just south of Shelburne. Green Party candidate Karren Wallace called on politicians and the public to come to the Shelburne site last Tuesday December 9th to witness the light bulb turning on beneath DWPI lines at a single pole with no other power source.

Mayor Bennington and Mayor White were the only County representatives to attend the demonstration in Shelburne, and both expressed concern with what they saw. The constant loud hum from the lines far above their heads was a worry for Mayor Bennington and he called witnessing the huge fluorescent light bulb glowing in a citizen's hand "just one more disappointment from DWPI."

Grant Peterson of Melancthon, whose home borders the transmission line, reports, "Prior to the granting of approvals to DWP by the MOE and OEB, area residents expressed concerns through written submissions to DWP and ministries regarding the dangers of EMF and stray voltage." He is concerned that, "The proximity of the 230kv power line to dwellings increases exposure" to those living nearby or those exposed on a continual basis such as a recreational trail." He says, "The MOE, OEB, and DWP dismissed the concerns submitted by residents and seem to have demonstrated no regard for the welfare of affected residents."

In a follow up with the Free Press, Mayor Bennington noted, "The Town of Shelburne had previously indicated we were opposed to the power line installation, nevertheless, DWP was granted the right to construct the 230 kV power line on the former railway bed. Now that the installation is complete, the community leaders should most certainly provide the information to our residents regarding the safety of these currents."

Connie Roberts of Corporate Communications for DWPI responded to questions from the Free Press stating that the phenomenon of the fluorescent light bulb is "a well-documented side effect of the conduction of alternating current." She went on to quote Health Canada: "Health Canada does not consider that any precautionary measures are needed regarding daily exposures to EMFs at ELF's [extremely low frequency]. There is no conclusive evidence of any harm caused by exposures at levels found in Canadian homes and schools, including those located just outside the boundaries of power line corridors."

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/environment-environnement/home-maison/emf-cem-eng.php>

This statement prompted the Green Party candidate, Karren Wallace to ask, "What is considered extremely low frequency and what frequency is DWP lines emitting? I have never seen a fluorescent light become illuminated when standing beside my toaster or microwave."

Counter to Ms. Roberts' reassurance, Health Canada also reports the following:

"The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified ELF magnetic fields as "possibly carcinogenic to humans". The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classification of ELF magnetic fields reflects the fact that some limited evidence exists that ELF magnetic fields might be a risk factor for childhood leukemia."

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/environment-environnement/home-maison/emf-cem-eng.php>

A 2008 Assessment of "Health Implications Associated with Exposures to Electromagnetic Fields in and next to Hydro Corridors in the City of Toronto" suggested an EMF management plan to reduce human exposure, noting:

"Studies have shown an increase in risks of leukemia to children who are exposed to average levels of magnetic fields above 3 or 4 mG. Based on the information available, exposure to EMF might explain 1 to 3 of the leukemia cases in Toronto each year or might increase the life-time risk of childhood leukemia by about 16 in 1 million for every increase in average exposure of 1.0 mG.

Increases in risk of cancer of more than 1 in 1 million over a lifetime are often considered sufficient for action."

http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20of%20Toronto/Toronto%20Public%20Health/Healthy%20Public%20Policy/PDF%20Reports%20Repository/emf_backgrounder.pdf

Mayor White responded to Ms. Robert's statement saying, "Unfortunately, our federal government is once again behind the times, for example climate change, PTSD support for veterans etc. The fact is many other jurisdictions have set "safe" levels of EMF exposure vs. duration/location of exposure. One of these organizations is the World Health Organization (WHO) which has set safe levels for extended exposure at 2.0 Milligauss."

DWPI's Connie Roberts told the Free Press, "Dufferin Wind Power is aware and respectful of health concerns and has posted detailed information on the project website." <http://www.dufferinwindpower.ca/FactsInformation/230kVPowerLine.aspx#Technical> Mayor White added, "Perhaps everything is fine, but without the information we won't know. Keep in mind that if we took DWPI's

word for it on other issues we would not have had the necessary remedial pole sealing program that the MOECC asked for after the fact. This happened only as a result of concerns raised by local citizens through the construction process. This issue is the same. He insists, "This is not an attack on DWPI or any other wind project as they may want people to think, it is only due diligence." Indeed, the challenge for the County of Dufferin will be to evaluate whether there is any risk to human health posed by DWPI transmission lines along the recreational rail corridor, past rural and urban homes, or from the underground lines past the school playground in Shelburne. In light of that, Mayor White introduced a notice of motion, at County Council on Dec. 11th, seconded by Mayor Bennington that County "hire an expert to give accurate quantitative measurements of the electro magnetic energy surrounding the transmission line. It also asks that a report be presented to council detailing levels and safe exposures." It will be on the table for next County Council. Mayor White says he will also be putting forward a motion at Melancthon Council asking they do the same. "As the property that the transmission line runs along is publicly owned recreation property," says White, "it is only common sense to get this information so we can determine if further action is warranted."

Mayor Bennington called the florescent light glowing and Mayor White's voltage tester signalling while underneath the power line "both alarming and upsetting." Health Canada states that "In terms of EMF exposures in the frequency range of 3 kHz to 300 GHz "current scientific evidence does not suggest any harm to humans provided that exposures do not exceed the exposure limits outlined in Health Canada's Safety Code 6." Mayor White gave assurance that, "Once the data is in we will know accurately where we stand and can decide on next steps."

By Marni Walsh