

DWP wins leave to construct power line

The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has granted a conditional 'leave to construct' the Dufferin Wind Power's (DWP) proposed 230kV power line along the county-owned former CP Rail corridor and several privately held properties.

The decision was posted to the Environment Bill of Rights on July 5, three days after a date was set for a preliminary Environmental Review Board hearing in the approval of DWP's 100MW wind farm, which included the transmission line.

Dufferin CAO Sonya Pritchard said in an interview Tuesday that the leave to construct includes a requirement that agreements with affected landowners would be a condition of approval. However, she said it also notes that DWP could have cause to expropriate if agreements cannot be reached.

The county and DWP have been negotiating behind closed doors for several months, but agreements must also be reached with owners of all properties the power line would cross, Ms. Pritchard said.

The agreements would be long-term. 'Although the County requested that the appropriate term of the agreement in respect of the rail corridor lands should match the projected economic life of the facilities, the Board believes that it is reasonable for the term for a land easement agreement to match the physical life of the asset, as its future economic potential cannot be accurately forecast at this point in time. In this regard, the 45-year term proposed by DWPI in the land agreement to be submitted to the County with respect to the rail corridor lands is acceptable,' the OEB ruled.

Whether or not there would be public consultations prior to construction would be left to negotiations for agreements.

Generally, there has been substantial opposition to the power line. This has been based on perceptions of health effects from whatever electromagnetic field and/or stray electricity there might be from the 230kV power line.

Especially in the townships where the line would be overhead, neighbouring residents and property owners complained of a loss of property values and changes to the landscape.

There was concern over what effect, if any, the power line would have on other uses for the corridor.

Shelburne council on Monday evening discussed the depth at which the underground line would be buried; in particular, with respect to where it crosses roadways.

Town planner Steve Wever explained in an interview that the specific concern in that the line could be tunnelled at a depth that would not disturb existing services including water, sewer and utilities.

He said the line would cross at least three streets plus the Fourth Line and 30 Sideroad.

By Wes Keller