

DWP to achieve commercial service in less than 18 months

Responding via email to questions about Dufferin Wind Power's reaction to the Environmental Review Tribunal's decision upholding DWP's Renewable Energy Approval (REA), spokeswoman Connie Roberts said, "We are pleased that the (ERT) has dismissed the appeal against Dufferin Wind Power's (REA) and we look forward to placing the project into commercial service.

"This wide-ranging and extremely thorough appeal process took over a half year to complete and included a comprehensive review of the project's effects on human life, plant life, animal life and the natural environment as well as a constitutional challenge.

"Dufferin Wind was diligent in its planning, design and engineering of the wind farm and the ERT's decision reconfirms that wind farms can be safely built and operated for the benefit of the community and the province," Ms. Roberts said, adding that, "At many points during the ERT proceedings DWPI stated confidence in the thoroughness of its studies and reports and was anticipating this positive outcome."

Continuation of the wind farm's site preparation and turbine base construction during the process had raised some local eyebrows.

"A common misperception is that a wind farm is required to wait for an appeal when in fact, under the regulations once the project receives its (REA) it is fully approved to start construction," Ms. Roberts said in response.

"The appeals against Dufferin Wind were initiated by individuals whose commercial, political, and personal interests differed from the community members who founded and worked hard to develop this wind farm project. Dufferin Wind, along with these community members, have respected the permitting process and, upon receiving the necessary municipal and provincial approvals, commenced construction."

There had been no effort to withhold construction from the public eye. Ms. Roberts referred to the DWP website, <http://www.dufferinwindpower.ca/ConstructionUpdates.aspx>, for further information.

On completion of the project, she said the original deadline is Jan. 30, 2014, but DWP has 18 months beyond that date to reach commercial operation. DWP expects to commence commercial operations well in advance of this date.

Although the wind farm has a final stamp of approval subject to any appeals, there remains a hearing on DWP's application to expropriate a rail corridor easement for its 230 kv power line to the Orangeville subdivision. That hearing is set for Feb. 18, Ms. Roberts said.

She explained why the 100 MW (230kv) transformer is being installed at the wind farm rather than at the substation:

"The transformer is located at the project substation to step-up the voltage from 34.5kV to 230kV. This transformer allows the project to efficiently transmit the wind farm's generated power to the Orangeville switching station using a single, three-phase, transmission line on a single wood pole line.

"Had the transformer been located at the Orangeville Switching Station, more transformers, more cables, and more and larger power poles would have been required. Locating the transformer at the project substation instead of the Orangeville Switching Station helped to minimize the transmission line's footprint and the overall impact to the community."

She said DWP had "continued to try and reach an amicable agreement with the County for the use of the former rail corridor but has been unable to do so."

According to Ms. Roberts, as recently as last August DWP "agreed to pay the County its asking price for the use of the rail corridor." She said it also offered to match that amount by paying for trail or other community improvements plus helping with a multi-use trail study.

However, she said, "County Council reversed their position and refused to negotiate with Dufferin Wind unless the transmission line was buried entirely underground. The County Council also directed County staff not to speak further with Dufferin Wind regarding this easement and this restriction remains in effect today."

Ms. Roberts said DWP's offer remains open, and the company would prefer to negotiate rather than to litigate. She said, however, that the costs of burying the entire line outside Shelburne "would be prohibitive." DWP is confident of success should the hearing proceed, she said.

On health issues with respect to electromagnetic fields from power lines, Ms. Roberts suggested <http://www.dufferinwindpower.ca/FactsInformation/230kVPowerLine.aspx#Technical>.

(There are conflicting expert opinions on possible health effects from high voltage overhead lines, but it's more generally agreed that there are no such effects from properly insulated and buried underground high voltage lines.)

Ms. Roberts clarified the appeal period as being 30 days after release of the decision. Appellant Dennis Sanford had previously said "15 days" but that had been in the context of the intervening holidays and attendant down time.

She also outlined the ways in which that tribunal's decision on appeals of the approval may be appealed: "An appeal of the Tribunal's decision on a question of law may be made to the Divisional Court -- filed in accordance with the Ontario Rules of Civil Procedure. The opportunity also exists for judicial review of the decision by the Divisional Court."

As well, "An appeal of the Tribunal's decision may be made in writing to the Minister of the Environment on any matter other than a question of law. The Minister of the Environment will then confirm, alter or revoke the decision of the Tribunal if the Minister considers that it is in the public interest to do so."

By Wes Keller