

The wind game

The Energy Review Board tribunal hearing into the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) for Dufferin Wind Power (DWP) is progressing into what observers say will be protracted arguments about health issues, and a war of words is continuing in Melancthon apart from the hearings.

Threats to human, animal and plant life are among the issues the ERB is mandated to rule on. Recently, a tribunal revoked an REA in Prince Edward County on the basis of possible serious and irreversible harm by Gilead Power's Ostrander Point wind turbine project on the habitat of the endangered Blanding's turtle.

On the DWP hearing, the tribunal was meeting in Toronto rather than Shelburne earlier this week. Part of the time was devoted to procedural issues, according to observers, and some to arguments over light flicker, one of the concerns of the CORE group.

At some point next week, health evidence will be admitted via a video conference with an Australian specialist.

In the meantime, Melancthon Mayor Bill Hill has received a response from the Ontario government to his letter of Green Energy Act criticism to Premier Kathleen Wynn.

The response from Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli is essentially a reiteration of the premier's position as stated in the Throne Speech and also of the minister's stated position that 'the Ontario government's priority is to develop renewable energy in a way that both engages and protects local communities.'

Mayor Hill's response to the minister is that, 'we are well aware of the changes that have been announced and feel that 'in reality' they will make very little difference.

'Your response is another indication, in my opinion, of how out of touch your Government is with the results and impacts your flawed legislation has on people and Municipalities that have to live with the results of it.'

He goes on to invite the minister 'and anyone else' to visit the township to discuss the situation.

On the other hand Wayne Hannon, who has spoken out in favour of DWP on more than one occasion, denies there's any kind of war going on as, he says in an Aug. 15 letter to county council, 'Melancthon Township signed a 'treaty' with (DWP) in the form of a mutually binding and fully executed Road Use and Amenities Agreement.'

Mr. Hannon says he doesn't feel that the mayor 'represents all of council and definitely not the majority of people in my township.' He says the issue has 'become personal.'

The oddity in the DWP situation is the ownership 'a majority held by Longyuan and a minority by the farmers who have also leased property and easements to the wind company.

It is not unusual that foreign money is involved in the developments. When Canadian Hydro Developers was seeking funding for its Phase 2 Melancthon wind farm, the prospective lenders included bankers from New York City, among others.

In the CHD case, however, the lenders did not become owners. The shares were traded publicly on both TSE and NYSE. Later, TransAlta acquired ownership in what began as a hostile takeover.

By Wes Keller