

VOW (VICTIMS OF WIND)

July 20, 2011

Victims of Industrial Wind Installations

Around the world, victims suffering from adverse health effects from industrial wind turbines are being labelled anti-wind, opponents, objectors and being against wind turbines. These claims are made by the industry, government officials, some of the media and some of the members of the public.

On behalf of the VOW (Victims of Wind), I wish to express my concern regarding this inappropriate characterization of those suffering adverse health effects from living in close proximity to these large scale wind energy facilities.

This pre-emptive stereotyping of people with legitimate concerns indicates the wind energy industry and government officials have little else left with which to attack its victims. The science has caught up and surpassed the culture of denial and unbecoming characterization of victims. Is this all they have to offer? Name calling is a poor substitute for the truth – that people world-wide are suffering symptoms as a result of flawed government policies and the implementation of them.

In Ontario, an appeal was filed regarding the approval of the Kent Breeze project by Suncor. The appeal was not won and the decision of the Ministry of Environment was upheld.

However, the decision of the Tribunal acknowledged that wind turbines can cause harm to humans based on siting. (Reference: Environmental Review Tribunal, Case Nos.: 10-121/10-122 Erickson v. Director, Ministry of the Environment, Dated this 18th day of July, 2011 by Jerry V. DeMarco, Panel Chair and Paul Muldoon, Vice-Chair).

“While the Appellants were not successful in their appeals, the Tribunal notes that their involvement and that of the Respondents, has served to advance the state of the debate about wind turbines and human health. This case has successfully shown that the debate should not be simplified to one about whether wind turbines can cause harm to humans. The evidence presented to the Tribunal demonstrates that they can, if facilities are placed too close to residents. The debate has now evolved to one of degree.”

The term "degree" means we must prove there will be serious harm (which is not defined in the law and it is unknown what would be considered "serious"), to an individual, in a specific project, before it is built and operating. A very challenging test and one that, to my knowledge, is not a typical requirement for other industries.

This is a significant acknowledgment. During testimony, a witness for the Ontario Ministry of Environment stated: “Wind turbine activist organizations have repeatedly requested that wind turbines not be used in the province of Ontario until there is a study conclusively proving that there are no health effects. There never will be such a study.”¹

The Tribunal also acknowledged that more research is needed.

“Just because the Appellants have not succeeded in their appeals, that is no excuse to close the book on further research. On the contrary, further research should help resolve some of the significant questions that the Appellants have raised.”

In addition, during the week of July 18, 2011, nine peer reviewed articles have been published in a scientific journal regarding health and industrial wind turbines.²

Two of the articles are authored by Carmen Krogh.

One is on WindVOiCe, the self reporting health survey that follows the principles of Health Canada for vigilance monitoring of pharmaceuticals.³

The second is on the theme of the impact of loss of social justice when people cannot obtain mitigation or resolution and often have to abandon their homes. It is a compelling and disturbing article that touches all of us.⁴

With these two recent events, we have advanced from a culture of denial to one where there is acknowledgment that the symptoms are real and people are suffering serious health problems. It is only a matter of time before this will be accepted by society as a whole.

Back in 2009, an individual representing a group of affected families testified before the Ontario Standing Committee on Green Energy and Green Economy Act. These compelling and disturbing descriptions reinforce the call for health protection:

“Each family has incurred additional costs from budgets for food, fuel, laundry and doctor visits while living away from our homes. Family events had to be held in restaurants. There is wear and tear on our vehicles. There is the extra cost of extensive phone bills from trying to get the problems fixed. There is the price of putting isolators on our homes to protect our families from the unfiltered power. There’s the cost of going to meetings. There’s loss of productivity due to sleep deprivation. A loss of three weeks from work occurred....”

¹ Transcript of Dr. D. Colby, Mar 29, 2011, p. 49, l. 17

² Cited July 19, 2011 <http://bst.sagepub.com/content/31/4.toc>

³ Krogh, C.M.E., (2011), WindVOiCe, a Self-Reporting Survey: Adverse Health Effects, Industrial Wind Turbines, and the Need for Vigilance Monitoring, DOI: 10.1177/0270467611412551
<http://bsts.sagepub.com>

⁴ Krogh, C.M.E., (2011), Industrial Wind Turbine Development and Loss of Social Justice?, DOI: 10.1177/0270467611412550
<http://bsts.sagepub.com>

“Ontario common law and MLS rules and regulations set out for Ontario realtors all require full disclosure of factual information regarding properties offered for sale by owners. This means an owner is legally obligated to disclose any information known or expected about a property that may affect a buyer’s decision to purchase a property.”

“My real estate agent tells me our farm is unsellable. Our homes are unsellable or of zero value. Buying a second home to live in, which I’ve done—possible lawyer fees, possible appraisal costs. Our lives are upside down for the last 18 months, and how do you put a cost on that? This is like someone committing a crime, going to jail for, say, 10 years and then finding out after DNA tests, “Oh, you’re innocent.” How do you get that time back at our ages?” (Ontario Legislature - Hansard, 2009, p. G-548)

Additional testimony continues to describe negative health and societal impacts:

“We are quizzed or defending our health problems at community events such as hockey games, shopping or church. Dysfunctional community relations have been created by the wind project representatives and some community members trying to discredit the validity of our problems.”

“The family unit for each family has deteriorated and has been torn apart. We begged for sleep, and four families were billeted by the wind company from their homes for 90 to 180 days in motels, hotels and a rooming house. The consistent stress has broken apart the family unit - no gatherings, few or no celebrations at home. At present, one family has purchased a separate residence to live in, and two others had to, at the expense of thousands of dollars, modify their hydro connection to try and live in their homes that they’ve lived in for 19 to 35 years.”

“Due to concerns for the health of grandchildren, grandparents, older children, extended family members and friends, we all strongly discourage extended visits to our homes. We had to meet somewhere else other than our homes for celebrations. “(Ontario Legislature - Hansard, 2009, p. G-547)

A third victim testified:

“We had no thoughts that we were going to have problems. When the wind turbines were actually going up at our place in the summer, we were putting a double-car garage up at the same time. We had put in a new fence, a new deck, everything. We weren’t expecting anything. We’re not anti-wind, we’re not anti-green, but there are big problems with the setbacks in our area.”

“When I hear people say, "There aren't problems," and "It's all in their heads," and they're just unhappy because they don't have a turbine, I don't even know what to do. My government has not been helping.”

“This hum and vibration is not covered in the guidelines. There are no guidelines for interior noise in our house. When the winds are whipping up, and we can't sleep for days and days at a time, there's nothing.”

“Now they're shutting five turbines down at night, and I thank them for that because that's helping with the noise, but this vibration in the house is horrible, it's absolutely horrible. Nobody should have to live like that, and I can't believe the government hasn't intervened and sent someone to our house to test for dirty electricity or whatever it is. It's unconscionable, it just is.” (Ontario Legislature - Hansard, 2009, p. G-517)

The six families who testified during these Ontario Standing Committee hearings have since been bought out by the developers. They all have non-disclosure agreements. This supports the serious harm occurring.

This testimony is not unusual. Similar testimony is being repeated globally where victims are suffering serious health problems.

VOW joins those who seek social justice and the restoration of compassion and caring for those who suffer everyday as result of flawed government implementation of large scale industrial wind facilities.

Yours truly,

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Co-ordinator of VOW (Victims of Wind)

VOW (Victims of Wind) is a volunteer, non-profit organization which provides networking and support for those suffering adverse health effects from living in close proximity to industrial wind turbines.