

The CFFO Commentary

Title: **Sharing the Wealth of Green Energy**

By Nathan Stevens

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Farmers across this province need the opportunity to diversify their income base through the opportunities provided by the Green Energy Act and the Feed-In Tariff Program. However, there is growing frustration in the countryside that “have” and “have-not” situations are developing. The CFFO is looking at ways to share the wealth of energy contracts that are proliferating across the province.

A strong potential exists for neighbours to be at odds with each other because of the way wind turbine contracts are being distributed across the countryside. Winner and losers are being created in the countryside because some are the “lucky ones” to land a turbine contract while others lose the economic opportunity. This situation is creating an atmosphere of frustration, envy and disappointment among neighbours.

Years ago, when oil and gas wells were being drilled throughout the province, a similar situation existed, with some being able to reap the wealth under the soil. In the end, this situation was resolved through the development of pooling and spacing agreements that required recognition and sharing of the wealth of this resource.

The question that comes to my mind is that when you get down to brass tacks, is the wealth of oil under the land really any different than the wealth of wind power above it? These wind turbines carry a footprint that effectively pushes back the development of other wind turbines in a given area. If these frustrations are to be mitigated, there is the need to recognize this impact and share the wealth of wind turbines that are put in place by large wind companies under contract with land owners. An equitable sharing of the wealth and the risks involved is required to quell some of the frustration and anger that is brewing in the countryside.

The CFFO continues to examine this serious issue. The positive economic opportunities of green energy for some land owners have to be balanced against the negative social impacts and lost economic benefits that these projects create for others. By sharing the wealth, neighbours should be able to look at green energy in a positive light, regardless of which side of the fence the project sits on.

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Nathan Stevens is the Research and Policy Advisor for the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. The CFFO Commentary represents the opinions of the writer and does not necessarily represent CFFO policy. It can be heard weekly on CKNX Wingham and CFCO Chatham, Ontario and is archived on the CFFO website: [www.christianfarmers.org/index.html](http://www.christianfarmers.org/index.html). The CFFO is supported by 4,300 farm families across Ontario