



*Long-Term Thinking  
for Today's Issues*

## **Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario**

7660 Mill Rd., RR4 Guelph Ontario N1H 6J1

Voice (519) 837-1620 Fax (519) 824-1835

E-mail: [cffomail@christianfarmers.org](mailto:cffomail@christianfarmers.org)

Web site: [www.christianfarmers.org](http://www.christianfarmers.org)

### **Green Energy in the Country Side** **A Series of CFFO Recommendations on Reducing the Social Impacts of Green Energy in the Rural Community**

#### **Introduction**

There is a growing tension in the rural community regarding the quickly expanding presence of renewable energy projects in Ontario. The presence or possibility of large wind turbines and solar farms are setting neighbours at odds with each other. This situation calls for the consideration of ways and means to minimize these tensions.

#### **The Emerging Issues and Recommended Responses:**

**1. Health Concerns for a limited number of people living near large wind turbines.**

There are reports of individuals in the countryside that are being adversely effected by large wind turbines. In response, the Canadian Wind Energy Association issued a publication that drew on previous studies to prove that this was not true. The opponents of CWEA claim the study was biased and its sources selected on the basis of being pro-wind power.

- a. **Recommended Response:** Another call for an investigation into these issues, this time launched by government. If health concerns are found to exist, then efforts to minimize the impact must be taken. Such a study should be government funded, hiring a reputable neutral institution to undertake it, with third party review of the findings based on scientific facts.

However, the limited impact of wind turbines on a few individuals should not necessarily be sufficient to stop wind projects from proceeding. The negative impact of fossil fuel consumption is more damaging to more people, and thus the lesser impact of wind should be a preferred option, but not without addressing the concerns of those involved.

2. **Lost Economic Opportunity.** Rural neighbours are concerned that their neighbour's turbine means that they cannot have one on their property and are losing out on a potential benefit. There are also concerns that their property may lose some of its value in the future.

The situation that is being created is one of haves and have-nots in the countryside. Many years ago, the same issue arose with personal oil and gas wells in southern Ontario. In the end, pooling and spacing regulations were put in place that joined the interests of neighbours together, forcing a sharing of that oil resource.

Wind power generation has similar issues, as the presence of a turbine impacts the potential energy generation of a turbine downwind. There are also setback requirements on wind turbines, creating another spacing issue. When dealing with 50 and 100 acre lots, this means that it is possible that some rural residents will not be able to access this opportunity.

- a. **Recommended Response:** Find a way to share the potential wealth of wind generation with neighbours. Each wind turbine has an effective footprint that impacts the ability of neighbouring farms to build another turbine. Appendix A details the joining of oil and gas well interests for neighbours that are interested in the same potential gas resource. The CFFO recommends that a similar set of regulations be required for wind turbines.

These regulations have to establish ways to share the wealth of wind turbines, particularly those signing leases with large developers, in a fair, if not equal, manner. For example, this sharing of wealth needs to recognize the additional impacts that an access route and other infrastructure have on the land owner on which the turbine is sited.

3. **NIMBY – Not in my backyard.** First and foremost, the age of cheap carbon-based energy is coming to an end in Ontario. A more sustainable energy system that does not externalize the environmental costs of fossil fuel consumption is the way of the future in Ontario. Part of that solution includes wind power, tempered by possible human health concerns.

- a. **Recommended Response:** NIMBY based objections must be disregarded in the effort to develop a more diverse and sustainable energy system.

**4. Strengthening Community Power Projects.** The CFFO hopes that a substantial portion of rural green energy projects in Ontario be undertaken by individuals or groups of Ontarians. There is the opportunity to develop the foundations of a dispersed, community-owned energy grid.

- a. **Recommended Response:** The CFFO is supportive of the concept of community-based power projects by the community for the community. A distributed energy system with the potential of returning profit to the hands of Ontarians is something groups of farmers and communities should explore.

A simple step is to increase the awareness of members of the existence of the Community Power Fund and the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association and the various resources that they have available to guide farmers in undertaking such potential projects.

Potential participants in such projects need to be aware of the significant challenges of getting such a project underway. A full business case that includes the potential of a worst case scenario needs to be considered.

**5. Stray Voltage.** Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact of "dirty" electricity and/or stray voltage resulting from the proliferation of solar and wind projects.

- a. Recommended Response. A study examining the impact of potential "dirty" and stray voltage from solar and wind energy generation needs to be conducted, such that effective standards can be established.

*Adopted by*

**CFFO Provincial Council**

March 31, 2010

## **Back-Grounder**

### **The CFFO Position on Green Energy to Date**

Farmers should have the opportunity to strengthen their farms being providers of feed, fibre and fuel. This means that green energy production should be an option for farmers to consider when developing their business plans.

However, there need to be limitations and other considerations taken into account:

Regarding Wind:

- The CFFO wants a full health study completed to be sure that people are not being negatively impacted. The organization sent a letter last summer with regards to this issue asking for a full study before the province proceeds with more of these projects.
- ***IF*** these issues can be resolved, then wind projects should be part of the green energy solution for a low carbon economy.

Regarding Solar:

- The CFFO wants class 1-3 land to be protected from being turned into solar farms. The province is now onside with class 1-2. The CFFO is onside with solar panels on buildings and existing structures

Regarding Bio-digestors:

- The CFFO believes that any farm that wants to develop these operations should do so. The stripping of methane from manure actually improves the perception (smell) of agriculture.

## **Appendix A: Oil and Gas pooling orders**

### **Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act**

#### **Joining of interests, pooling order**

**8. (1)** The Commissioner may order that,

- (a) the oil or gas interests within a spacing unit be joined for the purpose of drilling or operating an oil or gas well;
- (b) management of the drilling or operation be carried out by the person, persons or class of persons named or described in the order; and
- (c) the costs and benefits of the drilling or operation within the spacing unit be apportioned in the manner specified in the order. 2002, c. 18, Sched. L, s. 6 (2).

**Joining of interests, unitization order**

[\(2\)](#) The Commissioner may order that,

- (a) the oil or gas interests within a unit area containing a pool, part of a pool, an oil or gas field or part of an oil or gas field be joined for the purpose of drilling or operating oil or gas wells;
- (b) management of the drilling or operation be carried out by the person, persons or class of persons named or described in the order; and
- (c) the costs and benefits of the drilling or operation within the unit area be apportioned in the manner specified in the order. 2002, c. 18, Sched. L, s. 6 (2).