

ENERGY

Keep wind turbines off Moraine, group says

VALERIE MACDONALD
Northumberland Today

GRAFTON — A grassroots organization says it will present its case about industrial wind turbines at the next Alnwick / Haldimand Township Council session in view of a pair of proposals being developed in the municipality by the same company.

If the company's bid is successful, the first wind farm could be in operation next year.

"The Alliance strenuously objects to locating turbines on the fragile ecosystem of the Oak Ridges Moraine," the Alliance for the Protection of the Northumberland Hills states in a media release.

The Alliance also "argues

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Group opposes turbine projects

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that the Ontario Government's minimum 550-metre setback is insufficient to protect local residents, in particular, an estimated 250 families and two large dairy farms, from the possible adverse health effects of inaudible, ultra-low-frequency sound emitted by industrial wind turbines."

The projects, which have been the subject of a pair of public meetings hosted by Clean Breeze Wind Park on behalf of Zero Emission People Inc., would see the erection of a least five industrial turbines 150 metres high. One would be located near Centreton and another close to Grafton.

Alliance spokesperson Sarah Holland says that in addition to outlining concerns

to the township council, it recently met with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Given the contents of the recent Throne Speech about involving the public and municipalities in more consultations about infrastructure, Holland said she is feeling more positive about the prospect of changes.

"We're hopeful municipalities get to provide more input," and that the view of residents is considered more than it is now, Holland said.

In addition to setback regulations, the effects of infrasound, shadow flicker and electromagnetic current are other concerns the group has and are the subject of a recently expanded Health Canada study anticipated to be completed by next year.

Other Alliance members and Northumberland - Quinte

West Conservative MPP Rob Milligan have already said they want Wynne to put a moratorium on the further development of industrial wind turbines until after that study is completed.

The Alliance will make its position known to local township councillors on Thursday, Feb. 28 at 3:30 p.m. with a delegation to Alnwick / Haldimand Council.

Holland noted that the head of the council recently announced he was declaring a conflict of interest. Mayor Dalton McDonald told Northumberland Today that this is for pecuniary reasons (he rents land to a wind farm opponent near one of the proposed sites, which is also close to his own home farm).

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■ FUNDRAISER: Cool dip a hot way to pay for accessible playground equipment

New Polar Bear Plunge comes to Grafton March 16

CECILIA NASMITH
Northumberland Today

GRAFTON — Unlike many municipal councillors, Alnwick-Haldimand Township's Sandra Walls is a polar-bear-plunge veteran.

She's organized them before for other worthy events, and she has one planned March 16 for another cause dear to her heart: accessible playground equipment for the new Centreton Park.

"It's certainly a cold fundraiser, but it's been a hot topic of discussion," Walls said.

The plan is to have the brave plungers gather that day at the Lake Ontario shoreline at the foot of Station Road (across the street from the township hall). Register at noon, plunge at 1 p.m. and, if you care to stick around, enjoy a reception from 2 to 4 p.m. in the council chambers upstairs at the township hall. Thanks to the generous members of the Grafton Legion, there will be refreshments.

Walls had her first polar-bear plunge as a PTA mother, when her children attended Percy Centennial School and new playground equipment was needed.

It's a fun fundraiser she sees in a number of communities — "cold, but fun," she noted — the closest of which is Cobourg's Polar Bear Dip on behalf of the Northumberland Hills Hospital Auxiliary.

"They're fun and successful and unique, and it's something to get excited about

when you have the winter doldrums going on."

That was certainly the case back in Warkworth, when George Reichen's pond was the venue.

"It was March, and everybody thought it wouldn't be cold. But it was an absolute blizzard. You could barely see the people plunging," she recalled.

"But it was a ton of fun."

The event continued for several years, even after enough money was raised for the playground, she added.

Along with brave community supporters, Walls is hoping to see representatives from all the township's committees, board and departments at the foot of Station Road on March 16. Needless to say, she is council's representative.

Pledge sheets are now available at the Grafton and Roseneath municipal offices, or you can have Walls e-mail you one by contacting her at swalls@alnwickhaldimand.ca.

In her research of other polar-bear events to prepare the waiver each participant must sign, she sees no consistency on how deep participants are required to go out.

"Some say you have to get your head wet. I just say, if you get out in that lake and get back out again, I'm not going to send you back. If you're brave enough to get a majority of yourself wet, that's great," she said.

Minors can participate, she said, as long as a parent is present and signs a waiver on the

young participant's behalf. In fact, this event qualifies as community-service hours for high-school students.

Two rented buses at the lakeshore will provide warm change facilities, and members of the township fire department will be present with rescue units to ensure everyone finishes safely. But Walls is encouraging every participant to observe two safety hints: wear shoes and bring along a shore buddy for your own safety and comfort, to ensure you get out safely and to be ready with a big warm towel.

The reception is optional, she said, since it is a Saturday that falls on St. Patrick's Day weekend.

"I'm Irish and, if I survive, I will go out and celebrate after," she said.

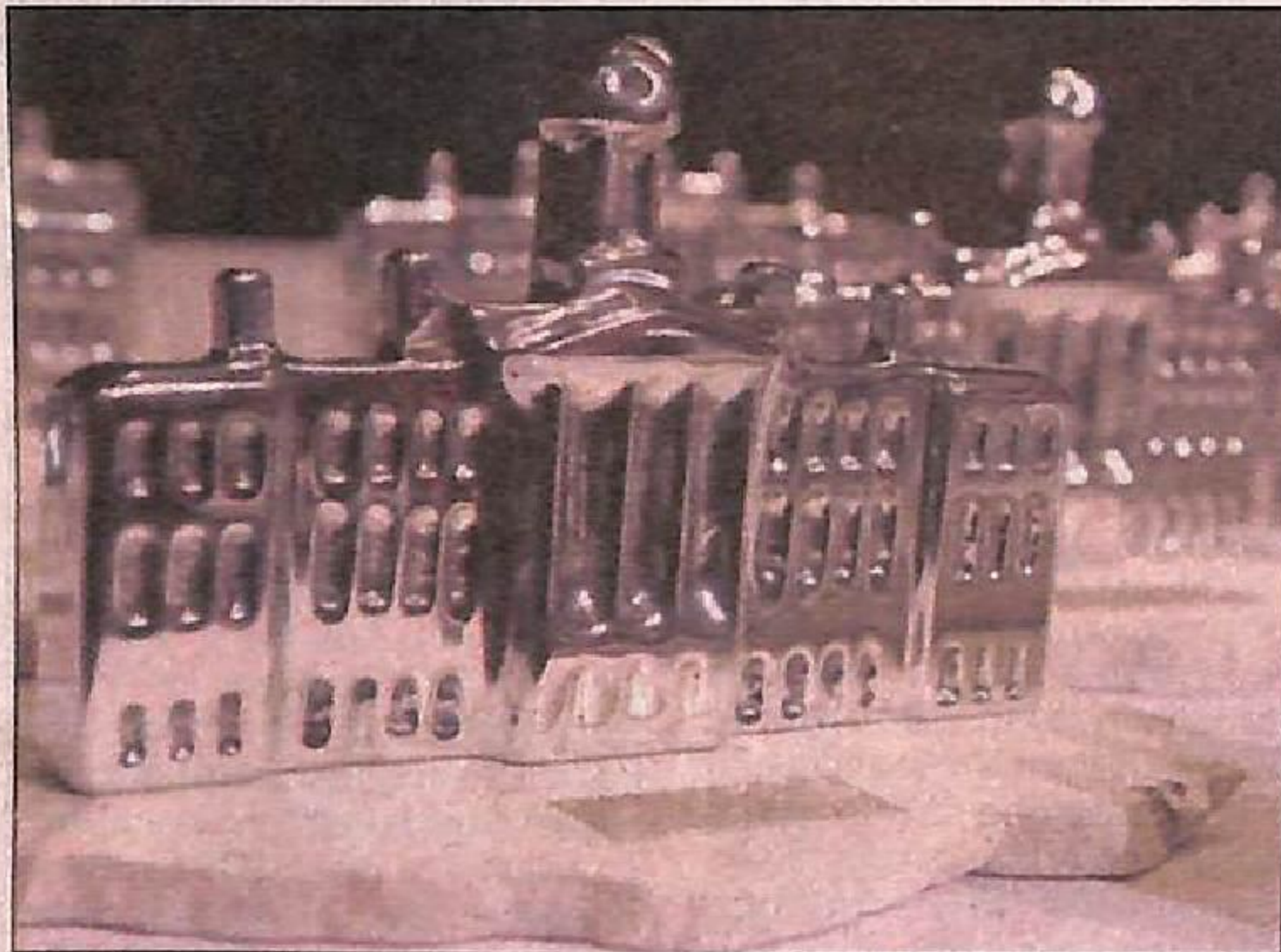
But it is a fun way to end the day, and a chance to be present for the awards: one for the most money pledged and one for the most creative bathing attire, adjudged by Mayor Dalton McDonald.

Walls is hoping Grafton's Polar Bear Plunge can be an annual event. Even once they raise enough money for the Centreton playground equipment, she said, there will always be a worthy community cause that needs support.

"I have never, ever doubted the community spirit around here. You bring them an idea, and they all rise to the occasion," she declared.

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PETE FISHER Northumberland Today

Individual award winners were presented with a Victoria Hall award unique to the Cobourg Civic Awards. The sculptures were crafted by Heselton Studios in Colborne.

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