

Band council considers wind projects, only 27 responses

By Donna Duric
Writer

Six Nations Band Council is considering going forward with two wind projects on unceded Six Nations lands, despite getting formal feedback on the projects from only 27 community members.

The limited amount of feedback has left council's consultation team questioning the goals of its community consultation and engagement process.

Amy Lickers, community planner for Six Nations Economic Development, presented band council with a final report on the project's community consultation results at last week's general meeting.

Council agreed to move forward.

"Generally, people in the

community were in favour of the projects," Lickers told council.

The decision still has to go to second reading before council signs any formal agreements with wind companies ProWind and Boralex and the resolution was barely passed last week when four councillors voted in favour of the project and four voted against the project.

Councillor Dave Hill, who was chairing the meeting in the absence of elected Chief Ava Hill, broke the tie by voting in favour of the project.

Lickers said the low turnout of participants has left council's Consultation and Accommodations Process (CAP) team questioning the efficacy of its community engagement

process.

"We are looking for other ways to engage the community and we will be coming to council to discuss what it is council is looking for when it comes to community engagement," said Lickers. "I know that the 27 looks like a low number so we need to determine whether you're looking for a community ratification process or community engagement process.

"If all you want us to do is go out there, get feedback from the community, make sure the community knows these projects are going on, then just be prepared these numbers could stay the same," she said. "If council's looking for a ratification process, we'll have to change our strategy for that."

She said the only time the CAP team sees a lot of community engagement on development projects on unceded Six Nations lands is when there is "a lot of opposition."

She referred to the community's opposition to a proposed 700-home residential housing project dubbed McKenzie Meadows in Caledonia during last fall's community engagement process on that project.

"You'll notice that when McKenzie Meadows came in, the participation increased but that's because there was a lot of opposition, a lot of concern with that particular project," said Lickers. "That's what we're seeing. Usually, if people are not so concerned about it, you won't

see a greater amount of participation in that particular community engagement."

Boralex is proposing to build four wind turbines near the small town of Port Ryerse on Lake Erie and ProWind is building a 10-turbine Gunn's Hill wind farm in the township of Norwich.

Lickers said because the Boralex project is so small, there is no opportunity for Six Nations jobs and that four wind turbines can be built in two weeks.

"It's not a huge employment opportunity - that particular project," she said. "We always do have jobs in mind. It's not like we're overlooking that.

"There is always concerns...things like sustainable employment

opportunities came up," she continued. "For the one project, for ProWind, there are some employment opportunities. There is some concern that it is mostly construction opportunities. There isn't anything long-term so after the projects go up, there's no employment opportunities being open.

"The other thing the community talked about was having a higher commitment to education and training initiatives," she said. "Again, ProWind does have a \$4,000 bursary. Boralex did not offer a bursary for this particular project." She said "there was a lot of opposition" to the project through Economic Development's Web site, sixnationsfuture.com, from Port Ryerse residents.