

# Concerns expressed over wind farm environmental assessment process

BY ANDY COMBER

Some Amherstburg residents are urging the public to provide input on an Ontario government review of the environmental assessment process as it relates to wind power developments.

Bill and Maureen Anderson, a couple residing in the rural area outside Amherstburg, became concerned over wind power developments proposed on lands near Holiday Beach Conservation Area, a known bird migration hot spot.

"A review is currently underway by the Ontario government on the whole process of environmental assessments on these wind farms," said Maureen, who is submitting her own scathing report on the environmental assessment process concerning wind farms planned for Essex County, including a number surrounding the Town of Essex.

"This was brought forward by a group in Grey Highlands who were concerned about the marginalizing of the 'NIMBYs' (Not In My Backyard) and the biased government promotion of this industry," she said.

The Andersons said local residents are beginning to echo the same concerns of citizens in the Municipality



GREEN OR MEAN? – Some rural residents are meeting this Sunday to discuss their concerns over numerous wind power developments proposed for Essex County, similar to the Port Burwell wind farm pictured above.

of Grey Highlands, at the south end of Georgian Bay, who expressed concerns over the planned proliferation of wind turbines in their community.

Maureen underscored her own concerns in a written submission to Donna Dougherty, senior program support coordinator with the province's environmental assessment and approvals branch.

"There are currently five wind project proposals in our little town from several different developers. This is

only going to escalate into chaos, pitting neighbour against neighbour," said Maureen. "I urge the Ontario government to put a temporary halt to all wind projects currently being pushed through until a more accountable and responsible approval process is implemented."

Bill Anderson said there are a number of questions the public should be asking concerning wind power.

"If the Ontario government is so convinced that wind power is the answer to

our electricity generation issues, why are we handing over \$30 billion in guarantees to private wind energy corporations?" he said. "Why aren't we installing wind factories ourselves, keeping generation in the public trust and insuring the lowest cost electricity possible to the public?"

The deadline for submissions from the public is January 29, 2007. Info for submission is available online at [www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry/028387ep.htm](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry/028387ep.htm).

The Andersons are among organizers of an upcoming public information session concerning wind power development in Amherstburg and Essex County.

"The wind power proponents claim that wildlife and neighbour's quality of life need to be of secondary importance to their 'green' solution," said Maureen. "In the rush to lease the land and construct them, little thought seems to be put into proper siting. To blindly support all wind projects regardless of the environmental consequences, is just wrong and irresponsible."

The public meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28, at the Malden Cultural Centre at the intersection of Howard and County Road 20.

# Lakeshore plans ahead 15 years

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Essex County's largest municipality is drafting a series of comprehensive plans designed to guide its council with community development strategies over the next 15 years.

Lee Holling, director of community and development services for the Town of Lakeshore, said the municipality's community services master plan includes far-reaching strategies in five core areas: tourism, heritage and culture, the Lake St. Clair waterfront, parks and recreation and the consideration of a multi-purpose recreation centre.

Holling said the project is about 50 percent complete and expects it to be ready for Lakeshore council approval early this summer.

He is hoping for a good turnout during a public

forum for the project taking place at St. Simon and St. Jude Parish Hall Jan. 30.

With a growing population of 35,000, Holling said Lakeshore has spent about \$1 million in master planning and economic development recently.

The town and London consultants IBI Group began planning in September.

There have since been consultations with focus groups representing Lakeshore's sports teams, heritage clubs and members of the French community to incorporate some of their ideas, Holling said.

"The primary advantage of this is to have proper growth," Holling said. "It allows us to move forward and offer programs residents want."

The plans look at offering more evening events and activities for youth, which may include studying the

costs of building a new arena and recreational facility.

Two years ago Lakeshore considered some conceptual drawings for a multi-million dollar facility, but the project has since been stalled. The master plan brings the idea back to the table, Holling said.

Although there is an existing twin-pad arena in Belle River, he said they are both consistently booked.

"The existing arena is approaching 40 years old and we have a pent up demand," he said. "Do we need a third or fourth pad or do we need to add on to the old arena? We need to plan in an appropriate way."

Another project, the community strategic plan, is expected to come to Lakeshore council in March, said manager of strategic services James Snyder.

Some of the highlights outlined in the plan include a

desire from the community for more health care services, public transportation and recreational trails.

"As we grow as a community, we start getting beyond the basic infrastructure and start looking into quality of life," Snyder said. "It's an exciting process."

He said after Essex County amalgamated in 1999 municipal guidelines changed, adding that it might take two or three generations of council to "come together" with a plan for Lakeshore.

Ward 5 Councillor Dan Diemer said there seems to be an interest in Woodslee and throughout the municipality for walking trails and recreational facilities but it will ultimately be up to residents to decide if they want to pay for the amenities.

If council passes the plans, they would be subject to review every five years.

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