

Farmers cautioned on wind power leases

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"Believe me, I am all for renewable energy, but for ones that provide feasible economic return for my province in the long-term and that do not degenerate one sector's quality of life or long-term viability," she said.

Members of ECWAG were also barred from the afternoon meeting. They handed out information sheets at both meetings.

Although a largely positive presentation was given by representatives from AIM PowerGen, Ted Cowan cautioned farmers and landowners on lease agreements, providing an updated list of 30 recommendations from the OFA.

"I've seen over 30 leases, and there are problems with every one," said Cowan, who outlined key considerations necessary to protect the rights of the farmers contemplating a wind power lease agreement.

"Don't sign a lease until you have considered the choices and determined what is best for your farm operation for the next 20 years," he said.

Cowan said some wind power companies are not giving a fair share of their profits, typically around 2 per cent, noting that the OFA recommendations call for a rent of 3 per cent for the first eight years, then going up to 8 or 10 per cent. The OFA also suggests that farmers contact their power distribution company to acquire their own right to connect.

Farmers were also cautioned on assessment and tax implications.

"It's your farm - it's your



Mike Crowley, president of AIM PowerGen, left, answers questions at a wind power meeting March 29 in Tilbury, along with Juan Anderson, an engineer with M.K. Ince, a wind energy consulting firm. AIM is considering a number of wind energy developments in Essex County.

taxes," said Cowan, noting that the landowner was ultimately responsible for taxes on their property. In addition, Cowan said there was no guarantee that the provincially imposed caps on assessments and taxes would remain in the future.

"I don't know, taxes could be 50 times of what they are right now," he said.

Outside of lease and legal considerations, there was detailed mention of more serious problems encountered by farmers with nearby wind power installations at the first meeting.

Cowan said a farmer had lost some cattle due to problems from stray voltage encountered right after a wind power development was commissioned, an incident that came to the attention of the OFA at the end of last year. Cowan declined to state the location of the incident, except to say it was in Ontario.

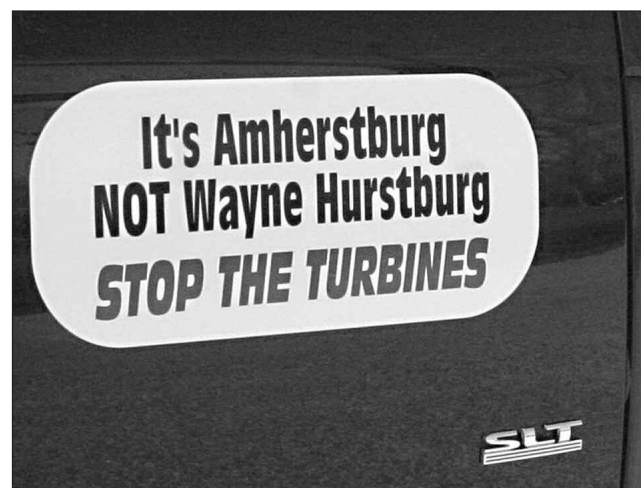
"If you put your hand on his barn wall you will have 83 volts going through your body," said Cowan, who noted that voltage has a greater effect on cattle because of their large body size, causing changes in the animals watering and feeding habits.

"Yes, it could be a problem here," said Cowan, speaking of Essex County's

numerous municipal drains and notorious wet soils, which can act as conductors of stray voltage.

To make the matter worse, Cowan said the farmer had not been getting help from the power companies or his municipality.

"Typically, it was who can run away from the responsibility the fastest," he said.



A bumper sticker seen at the Essex Civic Centre during a wind energy meeting March 29 protests proposals for wind turbine installations in Amherstburg. Amherstburg Mayor Wayne Hurst attended the meeting.



Andy Comber / Free Press

WITHOUT A CONTRACT - Paramedics with Sun Parlour Ambulance were joined by Cathy Carroll, secretary treasurer with the Service Employees International Union, left, during an information picket outside the Essex Civic Centre March 30.

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