

WHEN RENEWABLE ENERGY THREATENS THE ENVIRONMENT

STELLA, OWL CAPITAL OF NORTH AMERICA, December 2, 2015

On September 8, 2015 the Association to Protect Amherst Island (APAI) appealed to the Environmental Review Tribunal the decision of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) to approve Windlectric's application to build 26 turbines on Amherst Island. The Tribunal's mandate is limited to consideration of whether this project will cause serious harm to human health and / or serious and irreversible harm to the natural environment and animal life. Furthermore, the onus is on APAI to prove that harm will occur.

Amherst Island, known as the Owl Capital of North America, is a rural community of approximately 400 residents situated west of Kingston and only accessible by ferry. It is a sanctuary for grassland birds, wintering raptors, owls, and many species at risk. The Island, located on the Atlantic migratory flyway, is a globally recognized Important Bird Area and is internationally acknowledged for its concentration of wintering hawks and owls.

The ERT hearing is scheduled to start on December 4 at St John's Hall in Bath and will last till December 22.

APAI has engaged Eric Gillespie, an experienced environmental lawyer and intends to build on his success in submitting new evidence and presenting expert opinions about both the health and environmental impacts provided at recent the Ostrander and White Pines hearings in Prince Edward County.

Expert witnesses Dr. Carl Phillips, epidemiologist and Dr. Christina Davy, biologist will testify on behalf of APAI and will be supported by a panel of experts in hydrology, hydrogeology, ecology, and biology. Tom Beaubiah, Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, will present the case for the impact of the project on Owl Woods, wintering raptors and avian habitat. Dr. Bill Evans, will testify on behalf of the Kingston Field Naturalists to make the case that serious and irreparable harm will occur to Bobolinks as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed project. Amy Caughey, a resident of the Island, will comment on the health and safety impacts of locating a cement plant, laydown area, transformer station, mobile fuelling, a maintenance building and construction office along with the transport of thousands of loads of materials and heavy equipment in proximity to the Island school.

The Association is confident that the Tribunal will revoke the MOECC Director's decision, and recognize that irreversible harm will be caused to Amherst Island, recently

declared by the Heritage Trust of Canada as one of the Ten Endangered Place in Canada due to the threat of wind turbines on both its cultural and natural heritage. Nevertheless, APAI is fully cognisant that this ongoing battle between 'the little Island that could' and the giant developer is tilted in favour of the proponent and that like the majority of communities who have tried to protect the environment, it will face the following almost insurmountable obstacles:

- The grounds for the appeal are very restrictive and almost impossible to prove until the wind turbines are in operation;
- The unlimited financial resources of a highly subsidized wind company to hire lobbyists, lawyers and internationally renowned experts;
- MOECC Approval Branch, who is co-defender with the developer, has unlimited legal expertise paid by Ontario taxpayers;
- Ministry Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), who issued the Overall Benefit Permit and who is responsible to protect Ontario's natural habitat, has limited resources to audit the developer's reports and apparently must rely on the self-evaluated validity of the reports submitted by the proponent;
- Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sports (MCTS) who signed off on the proponent's Cultural Heritage Report is not even considered in the ERT process.

Over the last three years, several expert, independent and objective field studies have shown that the construction of the proposed access roads, as well as the construction of the turbines themselves, would irrevocably damage the habitats of the many migrating avian species-at-risk that inhabit this unique ecological gem. This proposed industrial wind turbine project totally ignores the importance of the biodiversity of Amherst Island known as a very special refuge for birds and reptiles. The thousands of submissions that were sent to MOECC agree with Margaret Atwood who stated "... Amherst Island is the wrong place, the very wrong place for wind turbines".

For details about the dates and location of the ERT hearing please visit APAI's Website:
www.protectamherstisland.ca

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