

## **Benefits of wind energy - beyond clean**

Jobs, economic benefits are part of every new project

Wind energy is making a rapid contribution to Ontario's electricity supply, and greater benefits lie ahead. Comparatively, last year in the United States and the European Union the largest source of new electricity generation was wind. Germany - with a population six times that of Ontario and a land mass one-third the size - has already installed more than 20 times as much wind energy capacity as Ontario; and has set aggressive targets to significantly increase that number by the year 2020.

While wind energy is still relatively new to Ontario, global wind energy capacity has been expanding by more than 25 per cent annually for the past 15 years. Wind energy is steadily providing a solution as Canadian communities look to improve the environmental performance of their electricity systems while also creating new manufacturing/employment opportunities. Ontario has a tremendous wind energy opportunity and it stands to gain enormously from it.

As wind energy projects are proposed in communities across Canada, municipal governments and local stakeholders will understandably have questions. Successful wind energy development will result when the proponent/developer listens, understands and responds to community needs. No wind energy project can be successful without a strong base of community support.

Ontario's new renewable energy approval process requires that developers consult with municipalities, First Nations and the public about their plans, and submit the results of those discussions as part of their application. After an application is filed, it is posted on the province's Environmental Registry for public review and comment. This step encourages people to offer points of view, voice any concerns, and know they have been involved in the process.

Developers of wind energy projects have a responsibility to commit to the communities in which they hope to install wind turbines. Canada's wind industry is dedicated to continually improving partnership-building efforts in their host communities. In consultation with municipal leaders and its members, The Canadian Wind Energy Association (CanWEA) is now developing best practice guidelines for community engagement that will exceed the minimum requirements established by law.

What types of questions are raised in Ontario communities about wind energy development? We often hear questions related to wind turbines and human health. Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Arlene King issued a report on May 20, entitled *The Potential Health Impact of Wind Turbines*. On the day it was released, she stated: "According to the scientific evidence, there isn't any direct causal link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects." As a responsible industry, we will continue to monitor and review emerging information on this subject.

Another prevalent area of interest relates to wind turbines and property values. Last March, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory released the most comprehensive and data-rich analysis ever undertaken on the impact of wind power projects on residential property values in the United States. The study used eight different models to assess the sale of 7,500 homes around 24 different wind farms over an 11 year period in the United States. It found on average, there was no conclusive evidence of any widespread property value effects (positive or negative) resulting from the wind farms.

One of the many strengths of wind energy is its diversity, notwithstanding its tremendous positive environmental attributes. Wind energy projects can be built at a variety of scales by a variety of proponents. Many First Nation communities and local organizations are now planning wind energy projects of their own. People across Ontario are considering a range of small wind energy systems that can be used to power a cottage, farm, or small commercial operation. CanWEA is now working with other stakeholders to incorporate these kinds of projects into Ontario's Green Energy Act by asking for a more non-discriminatory Feed-in-Tariff rate relative to those rates paid to commercial developers.

There are a growing number of communities across Canada benefitting from new local investment, job creation and tax revenue all associated with wind energy development. We are convinced that by working in partnership with municipal governments and local residents, our industry can help a growing number of Ontario communities capture the benefits of wind energy.

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