

Brief from “Friends of the Tantramar Marsh” to New Brunswick Energy Commission Moncton February 10, 2011

Bonjour Messieurs les commissaires,
Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon.

My name is Vanessa Bass, and I would like to introduce you to the people present here with me.....Dr Eugene Goodrich, Mr Michael Bass, and Dr Doug Key.

Today we represent the “*Friends of the Tantramar Marsh*” a group of people from the Sackville area.

We are also affiliated with other community groups both in New Brunswick and in Nova Scotia. These groups are concerned with the potential of negative impacts of irresponsible energy development on people, landscape, environment and the economy. Without excluding others, the two technologies of most immediate concern are industrial scale wind power installations and hydraulic fracturing for shale gas. Based on the unfortunate experiences of many people throughout North America including here in New Brunswick, we are convinced that current regulations governing the siting, operation and monitoring of these installations are inadequate to protect human health, property values, civil rights, the environment and our rural landscape. As our area – the Tantramar – has the potential of being affected by both industries we would like to share our thoughts with you on both wind and gas energy development. Also we recognise the connection that exists as a result of necessity with wind, gas and oil industries.

Wind Energy

We believe that what some critics consider to be an expensively subsidized and insufficiently regulated industry is

presently being promoted too carelessly by industry and government. This promotion is without adequate investigation of whether actual green house gas emission reductions match the promises made by the industry. We note the rise in energy costs in such places as Denmark and Germany and fear that in our Province this form of energy will drive up electricity prices to the point of making our Provincial and Maritime economies uncompetitive, and, at the same time it will have very small effect on global warming. We noted the advertised statement by the Power Workers' Union in Feb 7th's "Globe and Mail" in the "special information" section which appears to be sponsored by Sustainable Development Technology Canada - SDTC, a Federal Government Foundation. I quote from it... **"wind and solar power cannot power our province - there are billions in hidden costs - consumers will bear the increasing burden of expensive subsidies for green jobs "**.

We ask the Provincial Government through this Commission to address our concerns regarding wind energy and wind turbines.

Specifically these are :

1.Re: Noise and Health and Environmental Issues:

We need our Provincial Government to exercise the precautionary principle by following the recommendations of current medical research into the health effects of improperly sited wind turbines and to mandate a minimum set-back distance from the nearest dwelling far greater than the currently permissible 500-700 metres. We know that in Scotland and in some US states a minimum distance of 2 miles is standard. Actual safe distances may vary with the site, but in general they should be well away from human habitation. Harmful health and noise effects must be mitigated, whatever the distance. Environmental Impact Assessment processes need to be restructured and be seen to work not just for the developer. Present practice too often results in loss both to individuals and the environment.

2. Re: Property Values and Civil Rights:

We need our Provincial Government to require developers to guarantee the value of any residential property affected by the installation of industrial scale wind turbines, with timely compensation for loss to be assured by a developer bond or provincial fund.

Before a wind energy project commences, all local homeowners should be offered a written contract guaranteeing full compensation for the full market value of their property if they choose to move because of repercussions from the development.

We also want developers or subsequent owners of wind energy projects to bear the cost of decommissioning and removing obsolete or worn out turbines. This could be effected by posting a bond or setting aside an appropriate amount for each megawatt hour of electricity production, as is done with conventional generators.

3. Re: Visual Impact and Loss of Heritage Landscape:

We need our Provincial Government to identify heritage landscapes (– such as the Tantramar), historic sites (– such as the Tantramar) and other areas of outstanding scenic and environmental value for wildlife and wildlife habitat. We want these areas to be protected by law from intrusive and highly visible industrial development, including industrial scale wind turbine complexes.

We also want our provincial government to identify non agricultural areas with good wind resources that are well away from human habitation and sensitive ecosystems, and encourage wind energy projects there. It is only through setting generous separation distances that all negative impacts can be avoided.

4. Re: The Cost and Efficacy of Wind Power Compared to Other Ways of Reducing CO2 Emissions

Our Provincial Government should also objectively consider the most effective way or ways the Province could reduce CO2 emissions from our energy generation and consumption. This exercise should be done without preconditions with the goal of finding the most cost effective strategy for reducing CO2 emissions and do so by the largest amount at the lowest long term cost.

For instance there have been many claims by well-qualified critics that that wind power is a costly and inefficient way to reduce CO2 emissions from electricity generation. We ask our Provincial Government to investigate, with the guidance of appropriate experts, the claims of well qualified scientists and critics in this regard.

If there is confusion by the general public about the claims of the wind industry we know that this "induced confusion" is encouraged by promoters of the wind industry itself as was noted in a pitch offered to developers and the Ontario Government last fall by the "Sussex Strategy Group".

The "Sussex Strategy Group" is a Toronto based public relations firm. It advised the Ontario Provincial Government and wind developers to redirect or "change the channel" from rising electricity bills to the perceived virtues of renewable energy. To do this it said it is "critical to confuse the issue of renewable energy." The Group hoped to "rally support...to 'confuse' the issue" in politics, with the public and with the media from just (the issue of high) price to include key value attributes such as clean air, income etc". It was also suggested that emphasising the potential of job creation was an excellent strategy in promotion by energy developers.

The "Sussex Strategy Group" also recommended Core Messages by the industry emphasising that the high costs of implementation

were connected with investment strategy. This was clearly much more palatable - "instead of thinking green energy is more expensive than other types"(of energy). They also stated "that there is (a) "need to find the "sweet spot." They then noted " People think there is a link between jobs and green energy".

To us this emphasises what is wrong with Public Relation firms and lobbyists being manipulative in trying to influence public opinion in the development of resources. It is, of course, their raison d' être but it does nothing to find solutions to energy problems.

There are many people associated with our various groups who are taking stock of these and other questionable approaches by resource development industries. We would like to see a moratorium on all **new** wind energy development in New Brunswick until an independent investigation has been done in an open and transparent way...using good science. We would ask that each industry has a cost benefit analysis completed and calculated on the benefits of the industry. This process should also allow for an opportunity for input from all interested parties.

Hydraulic Fracturing

We have seen the effects of the Shale Gas Industry in many areas of the USA and close to home...in Penobsquis.

We ask that the Provincial Government address our concerns regarding Hydraulic Fracturing.

Specifically these are:

1. Re: Health and Environmental Issues:

Given the mounting evidence of possible threats to human health, water quality and the environment, we want our Provincial Government to impose a moratorium on **new** sites for hydraulic fracturing for shale gas until the comprehensive safety review currently being undertaken by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency is released in 2012.

As standard practice we think an Environmental Impact Assessment of every permitted drilling site should be carried out by the appropriate Provincial Department of Environment or Natural Resources and a neutral third party, rather than by an agent of the drilling company. This should be followed up by independent testing and monitoring of water and air quality wherever and whenever hydraulic fracturing is permitted. In relation to land use we would draw attention to the growing need for arable land and ask that industry is required to refrain from developing in agricultural areas.

2. Re: Property Values and Civil Rights

We think that proper siting of industrial sites is a major consideration and is essential to the protection of heritage landscapes. Promotional materials suggest that heritage landscapes are a critical part of our Tourism strategy.

As well, we want our Provincial Government and/or developers to guarantee the value of any residential property affected by hydraulic fracturing and ensure also that there is timely compensation for loss. It is quite feasible that this can be assured by a developer bond or provincial fund.

Also, we believe that *before* a hydraulic fracturing project commences, all local homeowners (not just lease holders) should be offered a written contract guaranteeing full compensation for the

full market value of their property if they choose to move because of repercussions from the development. The industry must also mitigate to the extent possible the negative impacts of energy development on both people and the environment.

In conclusion Mr Commissioners... it is clear many of the concerns we have are common to both industries cited and, in fact, to others.

At a very basic level we want to know that our Government will ensure that New Brunswick does not become an industrially exploited landscape...a place in which no one wants to live or visit.

Are We Against All Energy Development?

Neither our group "Friends of the Tantramar Marsh" nor other groups with which we are affiliated and who have common concerns are against energy development. We are very much for sources of energy that can effect a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Far from being "climate change skeptics," we believe that global warming needs to be addressed immediately, and with the most effective means possible. We want to be reassured that "green" does not simply mean expensive "green" dollars for an energy source that may have devastating effects on the New Brunswick and its people. Our quality of life should not be for sale.

A critical fact in our view is that just because a power source is an alternative, or a renewable, it should not be given a free pass on common sense scrutiny, and the use of scientific methodology, in objectively evaluating its merit. Like others who have appeared before this commission we ask for a comprehensive energy policy that not only looks at the present but will take into account long term requirements of both industry and residents. We are glad to note that your mandate requires that you develop measurable targets on economic activity, environmental performance, cost, reliability and financial performance. What we want from our Provincial Government are energy policies that are responsible, consultative, affordable and, above all, demonstrably effective.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.