

Is Ontario's rush to wind power killing the green energy movement?

Ontario Canada's push to wind power is under fire as controversial, environment-damaging projects are approved.

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, September 2, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Ontario](#)'s stance as an environmental activist province in Canada and would-be leader in climate change action is taking a beating after the government approved two controversial wind power projects, and continues to fight environmental groups and citizens on a third.

Last week, the Ontario Ministry of the [Environment](#) and Climate Change approved a 75-megawatt power project on tiny Amherst Island in Lake Ontario. The island is home to several species of wildlife declared endangered or at-risk by the same government, and is also a resting place for migrating birds. The birds attract eco-tourists from all over the world.

The threat of the wind power project to the heritage environment is so great that Heritage Canada's National Trust named the island one of Canada's Top Ten Endangered Places.

"There are some places where wind power projects shouldn't go," says Michele LeLay, spokesperson for the community group the Association to Protect Amherst Island. "This is one of them."

Also on Lake Ontario, is Prince Edward County where the province recently approved another large wind power generation project for the South Shore. The environmental danger is undeniable, says Cheryl Anderson, of the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists: "Data gathered over 20 years confirms the South Shore is a major migratory pathway for an astonishing diversity and abundance of birds. This unique blend of ecosystems supports numerous varieties of rare plants, eight species of at-risk turtles, Monarch butterflies and many amphibian species. Because of its unique biodiversity, the value of Prince Edward County's South Shore is unparalleled as an ecotourism venue."

The Ontario government heads back to the quasi-judicial Environmental Review Tribunal in September, to hear the appeal of a wind power project at Ostrander Point, also in Prince Edward County, halted by the Tribunal in 2013 due to the danger to a rare species of turtle. After several sessions in court, the decision has been returned to the Tribunal where community groups are in the unusual position of spending hundreds of thousands to protect the environment from the Ministry of the Environment.

Prince Edward County Mayor Robert Quaiff is outraged at the approvals and has been trying to see the Premier of Ontario, so far with no luck. In a letter to her he said "efforts to implement the [Green Energy Act](#) [legislation pushing wind power] are becoming counter-productive through resulting negative impacts to endangered species, as well as the prosperity and well-being of rural Ontario Communities."

The concern about Ontario's pro-wind agenda and resulting environmental damage is not limited to the southern parts of the province. Canada is known around the world for its iconic landscapes in the Algoma region around Lake Superior, now also the site for unbridled wind power development. Hills and valleys made famous by Canada's Group of Seven artists are now scarred by clear-cutting of trees, flattening of ridges, and the construction of roads and turbine foundations.

George Browne of Lake Superior Action Research Conservation (LSARC) says the devastation to the wilderness is immense. Wilderness, he says, "is a rare and unique feature, understood by many to represent the grandeur of nature; vastness is an essential part of the aesthetic appeal of the landscape. It is worthy of conservation."

Nature groups believe that Ontario's inappropriate choices for wind power development will actually harm the green energy movement. Ontario Nature and Nature Canada jointly stated: "We sincerely believe [approval of the Amherst Island project] will further tarnish Ontario's green energy industry, and ultimately undermine future projects in less controversial areas. The opposition of this project in the naturalist community is palpable. The risks of killing large numbers of raptors, swallows and bobolinks is high. Approval will further alienate a segment of Ontario's population from the green energy agenda and tip an already fragile balance."

Ontario is guilty of hypocrisy says Ontario's premier community coalition, Wind Concerns Ontario. "The government's recent decisions show they have lost their way," says President Jane Wilson. "Killing birds and despoiling wilderness is not the way to save the environment."

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