

# VOW<sup>©</sup>

(Victims of Wind)

By Barbara Ashbee

The mission of VOW<sup>©</sup> is to provide a compassionate support and information network for individuals who are experiencing adverse health effects from exposure to industrial wind turbines.

VOW is a volunteer-based support network formed in 2009 for victims suffering adverse health effects as a result of industrial scale wind turbines and substations being placed too close to their homes.

Victims have experienced deliberate attempts to isolate them and deny the validity of their complaints. The denial has been expressed by a variety of people including media, government

officials, developers, politicians, civil servants, neighbours and friends, and in some cases local municipal representatives.

Although there has been progress in building public awareness, the denial from top ministers and even the public health department in Ontario continues.

Families around the globe have been trying to cope with the loss of their quality of life and health and the dismissal of their situation. Knowing they were not alone and that there were many others experiencing the same problems brought a sense of relief, strength and hope.

VOW was formed to give victims a confidential source of support and assistance. VOW has helped new victims understand their symptoms, the process for complaints, how to keep records, and offers tips and advice on how to document actions and participate politically.

Members of VOW have the choice as to their level of involvement. Some wish to remain confidential, some wish to quietly assist other victims and some are able to speak publicly for those who cannot.

Membership is available to those from jurisdictions other than Ontario. There is no fee required.

## ONTARIO GOVERNMENT POSITION

Government officials deny there are adverse health problems and refuse to acknowledge the harm being caused by industrial wind turbines and substations in our rural residential areas.

Ontario Premier  
Dalton McGuinty

"But don't say, 'I don't want it around here.' ... NIMBYism will no longer prevail," he added, using the acronym for "not in my backyard."  
February 2, 2009 <sup>1</sup>

*Ernie Marshall at first supported the wind farm that was placed near his home... he also says that once the turbines got rolling, his health began to suffer. "I had problems with my heart, with my eyes, my digestive system," Marshall told CTV News. "It traumatizes your whole body." ... "Everyone was calling me a liar," Ernie Marshall said. (Ernie Marshall, Goderich Ont)*  
[\[http://aeinews.org/archives/695\]](http://aeinews.org/archives/695)

There's no evidence of negative health impacts from industrial wind turbines,,so there's no need for a moratorium on wind projects in Ontario...Ontario won't postpone or delay new projects..."We're going to have to make some new electricity... as long as we do it responsibly..." April 28, 2010 <sup>2</sup>

*"Each day is a struggle with excessive stress, anxiety, depression, headaches, and ear and stomach problems," says Roger Oliviera, who lives on Seventh Line in Melancthon. "I rarely get a full night's sleep, and have become dependent on prescribed sleeping pills...the sound comes right through my walls, I can no longer open my windows." He says his symptoms became "very clear and persistent" about a month after turbines became active. His house is surrounded on all four sides...the closest turbine is about 480 metres away and the farthest about 600 metres. He too has filed complaints against the wind*

*farm, which he firmly believes is to blame for his sleeplessness and anxiety. (Roger Oliviera, Melancthon, Ont.) Thursday Nov. 12 2009. By Richard Vivian Orangeville Banner*

"We've decided it would be a good thing to get rid of coal. It makes our kids sick and contributes to global warming," he said [Premier of Ontario].  
April 29 2010 <sup>3</sup>

*"We have taken three-year-old Keiara to the emergency room 10 times with problems and Dr. M... said my daughter shouldn't be there... Melissa as well because she is pregnant," ... "My daughter has had earaches with screaming at night and not being active at all. Since we've been in Kincardine she's been a totally different kid."*

Former Minister of Energy  
George Smitherman

"I think anywhere there is a new electrical (project), there will be people who oppose it,"... "We listen carefully to people and take heed of their (health and safety concerns). People see things in different ways." <sup>4</sup> April 8, 2009

*The strobe effect gave her a pounding headache, Ms. Fraser said. "One day after 45 minutes I went to the basement — the dog beat me there. I thought the top was coming off my head. I was holding the sides of my head, my eyes were running, I was sick to my stomach." Beyond the physical symptoms, Ms. Fraser recalls a feeling of uneasiness. "You can't get that anxious feeling out of yourself... It upsets your equilibrium." In 2007, on their thirty-fourth wedding anniversary, the Frasers moved into a house in the nearby town of Shelburne. The company had made*

*them an offer and, after talking to the grown children, all living in Toronto, the couple decided to take it. "It was heartbreaking when we sold that house," Ms. Fraser said.*

"If they've elevated their opposition to the point of outrage, then I think they're getting themselves worked up into an artificial lather." <sup>5</sup> Feb 12, 2009

*"I am angry, helpless, and disappointed our government would let something like this happen. I am appalled at their ignorance and lack of compassion. It saddens me to watch my family and friends suffer from the same [health] effects of the turbines. "I spend as much time as I can away from my home, away from my son who is also sleep deprived. We are exhausted and miserable. I often seek refuge with friends, often falling asleep minutes after I arrive. I feel like a gypsy. What was once a beautiful place to live has been destroyed." – (Tracy Whitworth, Clear Creek, Ont)*

"We passed a law, and the law does not create an opportunity for municipalities to resist these projects just because they may have a concern." <sup>6</sup> Sept 6, 2009

*"There's been no scientific studies on the impact of human beings surrounded by wind turbines," said Johnston, who has resorted to sleeping in a trailer at her son's home near Langton. "Nobody's looking at the effects these wind turbines have on us." Johnston and two other residents at the meeting followed Timm outside the council room and pleaded with him to get his company to do something....Johnston told Timm living near the turbines amounts to a form of "torture." (Stephana Johnston, Clear Creek Ont.)*





## Former Minister of the Environment

### John Gerretsen

"Some people don't like wind turbines," said Gerretsen. "The vast majority of people do. To me there is a lot of NIMBYism involved."<sup>7</sup>

January 15, 2009

"We live 600 meters from the wind turbines and in the beginning were supportive," said Mrs. Horton. "That was until we started to have health problems." According to Mrs. Horton, those problems included not sleeping, whooshing in the ears, and vibrations that go right through the body. "It is hard to explain, but I swear you can feel the vibrations in your bones," said Mrs. Horton. "We are planning to spend thousands of dollars to soundproof our home." Mrs. Horton also pointed out that when their family is away from the turbines they don't experience the symptoms. (Nikki Horton, Port Alma Ont.)

"If you live next to the 400 series highways in Ontario, you will be subjected to a lot more kinds

of noise than you ever will from wind turbines, from my own personal perception and from the studies that we've done,"<sup>8</sup> April 28, 2010

*"The turbines have taken over, they dictate when my family and I can enjoy the outdoors, when we can sit on the porch to quietly enjoy a cup of coffee, when we can quietly enjoy the company of friends and relatives at our home, when we can sleep. Family reunion plans were cancelled because we cannot take a chance that it will be a noisy turbine day that will drive everybody away and perhaps make some of the people feel ill...."*

*Every precious day in our lives is a gift that we expected to enjoy in peace surrounded by the sounds of nature. We often now suffer, surrounded by the on/off man made noise of the turbines, it is a form of torture." [Personal communications]*

"Our approach is progressive – Ontario is a leader in establishing clear setbacks...protective of human health and the environment..." The Ministry of the Environment continues to monitor new scientific

information... Should new information come to light, we will review and amend our requirements...as we do for all other environmental standards today."<sup>9</sup> Jan 8, 2010

*"...Audible or not, I feel these sound waves immediately upon arrival at home. They travel right through my body. They disturb my sleep throughout the night, every night. I will soon be laid off and thereby subjected to these pulsating sound waves on a constant, continual basis, and my health will depreciate even further."*

*The MOE tells me if they find noise levels to be at an intrusive level the problem will be mitigated. If the MOE cannot (OR WILL NOT) be responsible for gaining knowledge on these issues, knowledge that is available from existing wind farms, HOW CAN THEY POSSIBLY DETERMINE SETBACKS?*

*...CANNOT SELL...I CANNOT GET AWAY...YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS...I WANT MY LIFE BACK. " [Personal communications]*

## Dr. Arlene King, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health

"...In fact, we have been having ongoing discussions with the Ontario Agency for Health Protection...What we'll be doing, when time permits ... is having a thorough discussion with all of the medical officers of health in this province about the existing information we have on any possible health effects related to wind turbines and determining whether any additional research needs to be done..."<sup>10</sup> Oct 27, 2009

*"It was another restless night in a long string of interrupted sleep. Amaranth's Leo Mendonca didn't feel quite right, like something was wrong, but he didn't know what, or why. When he got out of bed, he was struck by a wave of nausea ... "I couldn't function or leave the house," ... "I gave up. I had a breakdown. ... I was afraid to be alone." Part of that fear, he acknowledges, stemmed from not knowing what was causing him to feel as he did. At the time, he didn't know others living near turbines reported similar experiences. (Leo Mendonca, Amaranth Ont.) Thursday November 12 2009, Orangeville Banner, By Richard Vivian*

"There are no direct links between wind turbines and adverse health impacts," King said in an interview. "This variety of symptoms can be caused by a variety of different factors. It is important if individuals have symptoms or concerns (that they) be assessed by their physicians..." The review concluded the sound level from the turbines is "not sufficient" to cause hearing impairment or other direct health issues, "but it may annoy some people".<sup>11</sup> May 21, 2010

*Thompson introduced evidence at the hearing showing that the transformer station noise was audible within the house with the windows closed. He described the noise as a "nightmare" and a constant nuisance that not only affects his day-to-day activity, but also impacts the sales value and marketability of his property. In reaching its decision to cut his assessment in half, board member Marques wrote, "The Board finds that the constant hum alleged by Mr. Thompson does exist and significantly reduces the current value of the subject property. (Paul Thompson, Amaranth Ont.) January 9, 2010 Bob Aaron*

Shortly after the release of King's 14 page literature review that took 7 months, Dr. Hazel Lynn Medical Officer of Health Grey-Bruce and Dr. Ray Copes director of environmental and occupational health at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, who were on the team of consultants had this to say:

"The whole section that a couple of us really wanted in there on community health and community disruption went. It's not in there. I suspect politically she can't criticize another ministry, so I was a little disappointed," Lynn said.

"I think it's a fair comment that there is other material that could have been in the report and wasn't," said Dr. Ray Copes, the director of environmental and occupational health at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion and another member of the committee that reviewed drafts of the report.

Copes said there are "really important and quite legitimate" questions about wind farms that he and Lynn thought should be discussed, but "I guess the CMOH's report wasn't the place for it."<sup>12</sup> June 4, 2010

This is an excerpt from a response Dr. King's office made to a letter from a victim inquiring about duty to report health complaints.

"Section 11 (1) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) does require a Medical Officer of Health (MOH) who receives a complaint about a potential health hazard to investigate and determine whether a health hazard actually exists...However, section 11 does not apply to the CMOH."<sup>13</sup> June 10, 2010

The following email requesting assistance was sent 2 months after having had an initial meeting with a contact at the public health office on January 30th, 2009:

*"Earlier this year I was in to see you regarding sleep deprivation etc. regarding the noise coming from the turbines that surround our home...I have not heard from anyone."<sup>14</sup>*

And the response was:

"I empathize with your concern about the neighboring wind turbines and the ineffectiveness of various agencies to legitimize your grievance. Unfortunately your request that our public health unit be able to take some action on this matter does not align with the current reality. I apologize for any false impressions I may have relayed to you about any type of regulatory capacity we may have but to do so would only give you false hope and perhaps undermine any legitimate avenue of appeal you are trying to seek through the appropriate provincial agency or court action. Our public health unit does not have the recourse, resources or expertise to monitor the health effects of turbines and seek the type of remedy you are looking for. To circumvent or intervene with the processes already in place, however, would be foolhardy and wasteful on our part given our mandate.

I am sorry that you feel you have been undermined by these very processes but we are unequivocal in our principles to fully practice protecting the public's health in an effective manner with the tools and guidelines we have. To stray from this course, by pursuing such avenues, would be highly problematic for effectively serving the public in accordance with our public health protocols and directives."<sup>15</sup>

*"From our dining room table, they are there. When you wake up in the morning and you look out your window, they are there. When we go outside they are there. When we drive in and out of the community they are there. They are always there. They don't go away." The noise, he said, was a constant whooshing-type sound, and there was a physical sensation associated with it. "When the blade passes by the post, air and sound is compressed. And you feel this, in association with the sound. It's a really strange feeling and sometimes I would feel like my heart rate was altering, going a little bit faster. (Nicholas Schaut, Melancthon Ont.)*

# CONCLUSION

Government Policy for Renewable Energy implementation over rides adverse health concerns.

Until 3rd party human health research is conducted to determine safe setbacks and noise levels from industrial wind turbine facilities, including risks of electrical pollution, further development should cease and existing sites mitigated or decommissioned.

<sup>1</sup> February 2, 2009 <http://www.thestar.com/News/Ontario/article/585591>

<sup>2</sup> April 28 2010 [http://www.cp24.com/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20100428/100428\\_ontario\\_wind\\_farms/20100428/?hub=CP24Home](http://www.cp24.com/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20100428/100428_ontario_wind_farms/20100428/?hub=CP24Home)

<sup>3</sup> April 29 2010 <http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/801604--wind-turbines-making-us-sick-protesters>

<sup>4</sup> April 8, 2009 - At a ribbon cutting ceremony for an Enbridge Wind project in Kincardine. <http://www.independent.on.ca/site/tq=node/489>

<sup>5</sup> Feb 12, 2009 <http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/586337>

<sup>6</sup> Sept 6, 2009 <http://www.coldlakesun.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?archive=true&id=1593229>

<sup>7</sup> January 15, 2009 <http://www.wellingtontimes.ca/?p=699>

<sup>8</sup> April 28, 2010 [http://www.cp24.com/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20100428/100428\\_ontario\\_wind\\_farms/20100428/?hub=CP24Home](http://www.cp24.com/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20100428/100428_ontario_wind_farms/20100428/?hub=CP24Home)

<sup>9</sup> Jan 8, 2010 Personal communications from MOE from victim forced to leave home due to adverse health symptoms

<sup>10</sup> Oct 27, 2009 Lorrice Goldstein, Toronto Sun

<sup>11</sup> May 21, 2010 <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/812479--wind-turbines-pose-no-health-hazard-says-ontario-s-top-doc>

<sup>12</sup> June 4, 2010 <http://www.owensoundsuntimes.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?te=2610031>

<sup>13</sup> June 10, 2010 CMOH – Chief Medical Officer of Health

<sup>14</sup> April 4, 2009 at 3:15 PM Personal communications from victim to local Ontario Public Health Office

<sup>15</sup> April 4, 2009 at 6:20 PM Personal communications from local Ontario Public Health Office to victim