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LOYALIST COLLOQUIUM ON PUBLIC POLICY

187 Simmons Road  
Village of Wilton, RR#2  
Odessa P.O., Ontario  
K0H 2H0  
September 4, 2008

Loyalist Township Council  
Box 70, 263 Main Street  
Odessa, Ontario  
K0H 2H0

**Special Council Meeting, September 2, 2008**  
**Official Plan Amendment #18 - Energy Policies Official Plan**

Sirs:

I was one of perhaps two or three in the audience at the subject meeting who had not come by prearrangement to exert pressure on Council. Upon reflection, I thought it necessary to make some comments relative to the issues at play there. It would not have been possible to do so at that meeting, given the general approach of the vast majority of those in attendance.

First, I believe that Township Council and Staff have approached the issue of wind energy development on the Island entirely appropriately. By seeking to put into place a policy and planning framework that will enable it to deal with any future proposals that may come forward, Council has acted prudently and in the best long term interests of the Township and its residents.

The *ad hominem* attacks on staff and the assertions by several speakers about Council's intention "to ram through" wind power on the Island were disingenuous to the point of mendacity.

Second, I think it is important to recognize the issue of 'reasonable apprehension' of health impacts as raised by the principal interlocutor for most of those present, for what it is: A convenient cover to advance a quite different agenda.

As I understand the situation, notwithstanding the extensive use of wind generator power in Europe, the U.S.A. and other parts of the world, no credible link has been found to any tangible or scientifically observable public health concern.

It is, in the end, up to Council and other decision making or regulatory authorities (and them alone) to determine what is, in fact, reasonable.

I would posit the following for Council's consideration: Wind generators constitute no immediate or imminent physical danger. They are not likely to attack people, and

to suggest an imminent public health risk as a result of conjectural structural collapse would be fatuous. To suggest a public health danger from the visual appearance of the structures would be equally fatuous. Wind generators do not leave chemical deposits or other residues, toxic or otherwise. Nor do they alter the physical properties of air that passes through their blades.

The sole rational public health apprehension about this technology can only arise from concerns about the proximity of electrical current or about noise.

The logical public policy approach, thus, would be to accord any health-related apprehension based on sound or location the same level of credibility that would be accorded to concerns about:

- residential housing located near power lines (of which there is no significant evidence despite a century of practical experience);
- the intermittent but recurrent noise generated by farmers' power equipment;
- the intermittent but recurrent sounds of cows and other domestic animals on private property;
- the intermittent but recurrent sounds of lake vessels' fog horns;
- the intermittent but recurrent sounds generated by power lawn mowers or ATVs on private property;
- the intermittent but recurrent sounds of motor boats on the lake;
- the intermittent but recurrent sounds of vehicles passing by residences on public thoroughfares.

Third, I observed that several speakers raised a range of other, non health-related concerns. While these might well be genuine, the choreography of the presentations to Council made it clear that there was a concerted, and in my view patently disingenuous, effort to divert attention to points at best marginal to the central question, i.e., the need to have an official plan in place before any applications of any kind are made for any municipal government approvals.

One speaker, who claimed to be a local historian, raised the question of aboriginal rights. To anyone reasonably informed about the Island's history and current status, it is a clear matter of fact that it is subject to no aboriginal claims from any quarter. Similarly, a rather confused point was made by the same individual about hunting and the use of rifles when it is equally clear that, under the law, hunting and the use of firearms is subject not only to federal, provincial and municipal regulation, but also to the permission of landowners.

Similar concerns expressed about landowners being forced to locate structures on their property, or structures within metres of private residences can only have been based on wilful ignorance. If ignorance is not at play, the only logical conclusion is that such assertions have the deliberate intent to misinform and to alarm the uninformed.

I note in this respect also the assertion that the Township had a role in inviting

proposals for wind generator development. If not genuinely ignorant, that can only have been a tactical ploy to put Council members both collectively and individually on the defensive politically.

Fourth, from the general tenor of comments made by individual speakers before, during and after the meeting, it was plainly evident that the central concern is aesthetic, i.e., the effect of wind generators upon the appearance of the island.

Council might find it instructive, perhaps, to inquire how many people who object to the principle of development on the Island are recent or relatively recent arrivals. This is often, though not always, a gauge by which to judge their commitment to the physical *status quo* of any area, as opposed to the overall best interests of the community. Indeed, the speaker who indicated he had recently moved from Toronto was explicit on this point.

I do not suggest that aesthetic considerations should not be taken into account and weighed carefully. It is, however, incumbent upon Council - from the perspective of good public policy - to determine what influence that consideration should have in any decisions it may be called upon to make.

As Council is no doubt well aware, the force with which an opinion is voiced is not a valid measure of its substantive merit. Often quite the opposite is the case.

Fifth, the undercurrent of intimidation and potential for violence in the public and in quasi-private comments of some individuals at the meeting is a matter of legitimate concern.

I note that one speaker who cited experience as a union organizer specifically asserted that he "would do everything" he could to stop any wind power development. The clear implication was that he was prepared to do so both before and after any development might be in place. I noted that he did not specifically eschew violent action or threats to property or persons.

I note that another speaker promised to engage any decision making process with appeals at every level, and by implication, threatened to embroil the Township and Council in protracted legal action and, presumably, the unproductive expenditure of public funds.

Sixth, I believe it important to understand clearly the ultimate purpose of those who have organized themselves to oppose the issue of wind power development.

Any wind power development necessarily will involve the consent and cooperation of landowners on the Island. The political intent is, if possible, to force Council to foreclose in advance the possibility of any such consent and cooperation by landowners.

In plain words, that intent is to circumscribe the freedom of other residents of Amherst Island to use their own property as they may see fit within the confines of the law.

Before concluding, I should make it clear that I have no personal view on whether or where wind generators might be built on the Island, nor any collateral interest in such development. In the interest of transparency and, given the tactics used by those at the meeting, the possibility that personal aspersions may be cast, I would note that my wife and her family have been ratepayers on Amherst Island for forty-nine years. (I have no idea, nor have I inquired, what their views might be on locating wind generators anywhere on the island.)

I do, however, have a very strong personal interest in sound, long term public policy development and implementation.

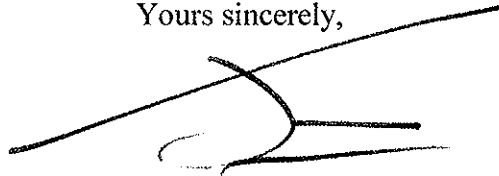
In the broadest possible context, the critical issue at play here is how all levels of government will address pressing environmental and energy questions.

The critical issue at the local level is whether self-interested groups of "concerned citizens" are to be permitted to block decisions or developments that are in the broader public interest.

The manipulation of information, its misrepresentation, and the quite crass political machinations practised by some of the proponents on the question before Council are inimical to good public policy.

They should not and cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Licharson', written over a horizontal line.

John Licharson

*Post Scriptum*

It will be noted, perhaps, that I have written on the letterhead of the Wilton Colloquium on Public Policy. My purpose in doing so is to arrogate to myself, demonstrably in the same fashion as the Coalition to Protect Amherst Island, gravitas in support of the public expression of my views.

The Wilton Colloquium on Public Policy, which I have the honour to chair, has as its principal objectives the fostering of transparent public policy development and the adoption of sound public policy by all levels of government.