

Invenergy wind turbine contract terminated | Your online newspaper for Southwestern Ontario

southwesternontario.ca/news/invenergy-wind-turbine-contract-terminated/

BY ANDREW SMITH
BANNER STAFF

NORTH PERTH – Opponents of a proposed wind turbine project in Elma and Mornington can celebrate Christmas a little early with news that the Invenergy Canada project has been cancelled.

Information surrounding the plan to build up to 26 industrial wind turbines in North Perth and Perth East has been limited since the Ministry of the Environment deemed the application to be incomplete in August 2013, but an inquiry by The Banner to Invenergy LLC director of communications Alissa Krinsky confirmed on Monday that the Conestogo Wind Power Partnership and the Ontario Power Authority have mutually agreed to terminate the Feed-In Tariff contract for the Conestogo Wind Project.

“Invenergy is disappointed that the project will not move forward,” a statement from the company said.

“We have been working in the community since 2011 to build relationships with landowners, business owners, municipal representatives and other local stakeholders. If developed, the project could have brought many long-lasting benefits to the community.”

The company declined to comment further as to why the contract for the project was terminated. OPA media relations specialist John Cannella also confirmed that the termination of Invenergy’s FIT contract was mutual, but was unable to provide any further details.

Wind Concerns Ontario executive member Warren Howard said the project’s cancellation comes as a victory for the Elma-Mornington Concerned Citizens group that has co-ordinated an effort against the project and how it would impact the rural community.

“There’s a whole leadership team out there in Elma and Mornington who have pushed this thing forward, they’re to be congratulated,” Howard said. “It took a while to get the understanding out, but there was strong opposition to that, they understood what it meant for their community.”

Awareness and education played a large part in the campaign against the wind turbine project in this community, which included speakers and information from other project areas such as Ripley, where turbines were blamed for health problems ranging from headaches and sleep loss to high blood pressure.

“The key thing in this project was that everybody knew what happened in Ripley,” Howard said. “When you came to those public meetings and [Invenergy] said there was no problems, they have no credibility.”

Invenergy Canada hosted several public consultation meetings over the course of the project, which Howard said fell short of answering the concerns of residents.

“I just think Invenergy shot themselves in the foot a number of times,” Howard said.

“They never really treated people who live here with respect or gave them straight answers.”

Wind project leaseholders in the community have been asked to accept and sign termination agreements, which Howard said leaves very little room for the project to re-surface in the future following consultation with a lawyer.

“Essentially the proposed agreement covers off all of the key issues that he is looking for,” Howard said. “It looks pretty comprehensive. The lawyer is giving us some confidence.”

Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece said he has done his part in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fight wind turbine projects across the riding, but he gave full credit to the residents for voicing their opposition.

“It’s the work and the effort of the people in those communities that really were the ones that brought this about,” he said. “I want to congratulate them for their work and their hard efforts.”

Pettapiece added it’s unfortunate the Liberal government is unwilling to budge on providing more power for municipalities in the Green Energy Act, leaving the door open for more costly battles in the future.

“It’s too bad that the Green Energy Act is written in such a way that it takes planning authority away from municipalities,” Pettapiece said. “Fighting these wind turbine farms is still going to be an issue throughout Ontario.”

As far as how the communities of Elma and Mornington move forward, Howard prays that hard feelings between neighbours who supported the project and those who opposed it are softened over time. "What I hope happens is that the divisions that this project has caused manage to heal," Howard said. "I hope we get over that and come back as a community."