

# ORANGEVILLE CITIZEN

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## Turbine hearings likely to end next week

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Final arguments at the Ontario Municipal Board hearing into 22 wind turbine sites in Amaranth and a second transformer at the Melancthon Wind Farm substation, also in Amaranth, may come as early as next Wednesday or Thursday, if all goes according to schedule.

A decision on the project is expected to follow shortly after Amaranth Township Council holds a public meeting on site plans Oct. 17 but, if that decision is favourable to the project, OMB hearing officer Norm Jackson would be expected to withhold his order until details such as noise-monitoring protocols have been resolved.

The hearing could, however, be prolonged by the inclusion of Melancthon residents Joan and John Lever as parties. John Lever told the hearing Monday that he would summarize a massive array of information that Joan Lever has assembled from the Internet, and that they would like status to be able to cross-examine other parties.

Toronto lawyer Jeff Wilker, acting for the Township, objected to the inclusion of the Levers as parties, as they had presented their information to the Melancthon hearing, and much of their research is of issues outside the purview of the Board.

"From the perspective of the Township, taxpayer resources are being expended. I'm not trying to limit (Levers) but I don't see what's to be gained by his crossexamination," he said, since the information had already been presented at the Melancthon hearing.

However, Mr. Jackson reminded Mr. Wilker that the Thomson Rogers lawyer had argued earlier that no evidence from the Melancthon hearing should flow into the Amaranth one.

The hearing, into the Amaranth portion of the wind farm's 132-megawatt (MW) Phase 2, began Monday in township council chambers at Laurel, and had been scheduled for six weeks, beginning on Sept. 11.

Instead, the originally scheduled hearing went to mediation before OMB Vice-Chairman Dan Granger, and the issues were trimmed to five from 30. Concerns beyond the five main issues were left to experts to resolve outside the hearing.

Then, last weekend, the Township and proponent Canadian Hydro Developers Inc. reached agreement in principle on all five issues affecting the turbines themselves, But this did not include some concerns about the second transformer.

(CHD went to the OMB when the council "refused or neglected" to enact Official Plan (OP) and zoning amendments to allow the wind farm to proceed. The principle OP amendments would be with respect to airstrips and generally to permit industrial scale turbines. The zoning would generally be site-specific to 20 properties for either 22 or 23 turbines. The application was for 23, but one of those, No. 59, is likely to be deleted.)

The minutes of settlement between Amaranth and CHD were to be filed with Mr. Jackson this week, but several parties were still to be heard from prior to the closing arguments. Those included pilots concerned about setbacks from aerodromes (grass airstrips); neighbours of the transformer substation concerned about noise, and others with general concerns.

"I want a full hearing on what remains, and to be fair," said Mr. Jackson.

The airstrip concerns appeared to be non-issues as of Tuesday, with the possible exception of three of the 18 such that had been identified. But Janikke Heiberg, who recently purchased her property, raised the possibility that she might wish to build an airstrip.

The setback problem was that the OP specifies a clear area of 10 kilometres from "airstrips," whereas CHD has "voluntarily" agreed to Transport Canada recommendations of 2.5 km from each end of airstrips, and a 600- metre slope on both sides. It has agreed as well to increase that setback to 4 km from 2.5 for two registered airstrips - Burbank and Briggs.

Otherwise, the hearing determined that all turbines would be in compliance with Transport Canada recommendations, although not with the Township's Official Plan.

Mr. Jackson pressed the CHD planner on the point of compliance. Saying he understood that Transport Canada was concerned about safety, he posed: "I don't care whether you call it guidelines, suggestions or recommendations. Are you in compliance?"

There were a few surprises beyond the settlement Monday. Roy and Teresa Brownell withdrew as parties to the hearing. Ian Reid, who had been listed as their witness, became a participant. The Board left it open for Paul Lamont - who has not been able to attend to date - to come as a party or participant.

Mr. Reid said Mr. Lamont's interest would be as a selfemployed aircraft maintenance mechanic with an airstrip in Amaranth, and as the head mechanic at York Soaring Association.

(Mr. Lamont's airstrip is outside the study area.)

Still to be heard from were the airstrip interests and witnesses for Paul Thompson, whose concerns are with transformer noise and siting.

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