

Ministry of the Environment  
West Central Region

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Ministère de l'Environnement  
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September 30, 2009

Ms. Colette McLean  
E-mail to: [colemont@cdpwise.net](mailto:colemont@cdpwise.net)

Dear Ms. McLean:

Thank you for your e-mail dated September 17, 2009 to the Minister of the Environment in which you express concerns regarding ministry activities at wind farms in Norfolk County. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the minister.

Unlike typical industrial noise sources, measurement of noise from wind turbines raises technical challenges. Typical noise measurement protocols call for no wind during noise measurements since background wind will result in inaccurate measurements. However, in the case of wind turbines, wind must be present for them to operate. The current science available for measuring noise emanating from wind turbines is technically challenging, resource intensive and will still result in measurements which are difficult to reproduce and/or interpret. There is currently no scientifically accepted field methodology to measure wind turbine noise to determine compliance or to determine non compliance with a Certificate of Approval limits.

The ministry is continuing to monitor and assess the developing science around noise measurements from wind turbines. Once the science advances to the point where noise measurement protocols are practical and the results sufficiently reliable, a revised audit/inspection process which includes field measurement/monitoring of wind turbine noise will be developed.

In the meantime, the ministry is committed to providing timely services for receiving, assessing and coordinating responses to all complaints related to potential environmental incidents (including those from wind farms). The ministry's first level of field response is provided by environmental officers working out of the ministry's district or area offices. For example, in the case of an incident involving wind farm operations noise that has resulted in a complaint called into the Ministry, the District response staff will

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attempt to verify the complaint and assess the impact on the complainant which may include several visits to the complainant's residence at various times of the day. After the site assessment is completed, District staff will decide whether actions need to be taken to resolve the situation. In addition to the complaint response work, the ministry is also undertaking proactive inspections of wind farm operations to ensure they are complying with all conditions in their Certificates of Approval and any other environmental regulatory requirements.

If the public has any noise concerns, incidents to report, or has any complaints they would like to raise relating to a wind farm operation they should contact their local District Office. A listing of MOE District Offices is available at <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/org/op.htm>. Any complaints after regular business hours may be directed to the Ministry's Spills Action Centre at 1-800-268-6060.

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) proclaimed the new Renewable Energy Approval (REA) Regulation, made under the *Environmental Protection Act*, on September 24, 2009. The new REA process will ensure transparent decision making and mandatory public consultation on Renewable Energy Projects such as wind turbines. Ontario has taken a cautious approach to setting standards for wind setbacks and noise limits to protect Ontarians. Ontario is a leader in establishing clear setbacks for renewable energy projects that are protective of human health and the environment.

I also note your concerns regarding turbines in Essex and Kent. I understand my colleagues in the South West Region are working on addressing these concerns.

Thank you, again, for bringing your comments and concerns to my attention.

Yours truly,



Bill Bardswick  
Director  
West Central Region  
Ministry of the Environment

c. Anne Neary, Director, South West Region