

# Green skeptics simply tilting at windmills

## Prince coming to Saskatoon

BY BRONWYN EYRE, SPECIAL TO THE STARPHOENIX    OCTOBER 29, 2011



Local Input~ GODERICH, ON. AUGUST 30, 2007. - One of the 22 windmills in Epcor's wind farm project towers over the landscape near the town of Goderich, Ontario on Thursday August 30, 2007. (Windsor Star - ) \*Wind farms, Windfarms, turbines, wind power, wind energy, green energy, environment.

**Photograph by:** Tyler Brownbridge/Postmedia News, Tyler Brownbridge/Postmedia News

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NIMBY-ism - as in not-in-my-backyard-ism - used to describe public opposition to a chemical plant, nuclear waste dump or highway expansion project.

Not anymore. Nowadays, the label is used almost exclusively to discredit those who dare question green policies.

Residents of Saskatoon's Montgomery neighbourhood were recently accused of NIMBY-ism after they challenged plans to build an 80-metre tall wind turbine at the nearby landfill.

Coun. Pat Lorje, who wants environmental assessment reports made public before the city seeks construction proposals for the turbine, said: "I feel like I'm fighting a losing battle because as soon as

you announce a project is green, everybody stands and salutes the flag."

Some valid concerns of residents have also been dismissed. Dangers to the local bird population? An urban myth. Health risks? According to a city report, 37 decibels will be "well below those known to cause fatigue and sleep deprivation." Noise levels? "Similar to background noise levels in a quiet bedroom."

How would they know? Just to be clear: We're about to spend \$5 million (the provincial and federal governments are contributing \$2.35 million) on one wind turbine when it takes thousands to make any dent in power generation levels at all.

In the U.K., for example, 2,000 wind turbines contribute less than one per cent of all required electricity. The CEO of the German-owned E.ON electrical company recently admitted the backup power needed to compensate for most wind turbines amounts to 90 per cent of their capacity.

On average, wind power - which is prone, of course, to unpredictable wind fluctuations - produces only about 30 per cent of its so-called "nameplate power." This makes meeting 24-7 demand impossible.

Furthermore, according to physicist and longtime environmental activist John Droz, "the most independent scientific study ever done," by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in 2007 concluded CO2 savings from wind power will amount to only 1.8 per cent by 2020.

"The only thing green in this whole matter (of wind power) is the substantial profit being made by the developers," Droz says. Meanwhile, Germany's Spiegel magazine recently reported: "Despite Europe's boom in solar and wind energy, CO2 emissions haven't been reduced by even a single gram."

But that's not stopping NDP Leader Dwain Lingenfelter, who recently pledged 400 megawatts of new wind power over the next four years. "The costs of wind and natural gas production are very comparable," he said.

Saskatchewan Party Leader Brad Wall refutes that. "Our cost on wind power is about \$1 billion. It's either going to come from people's power bills - they're going to have to pay more - or it's going to come from the budget."

Speaking of budgets, the Wall government recently announced \$1.24 billion for the Boundary Dam Integrated Carbon Capture and Storage Demonstration Project near Estevan. It will be the world's first power plant with a fully-integrated carbon capture system - one of the few "big hammers," according to the Pembina Institute, available to combat greenhouse gas emissions.

The plant will capture CO2, which SaskPower will sell to oil companies for enhanced oil recovery. This will create an income stream which, along with a federal contribution of \$240 million, proponents say will make the project viable.

Well, let's hope. But let's not forget it's carbon capture at the WeyburnMidale site - established in 2000

as the world's largest carbon capture site - that's causing nightmares for Cameron and Jane Kerr.

The Kerrs' land - their backyard, so to speak - sits right on top of the project, which injects greenhouse gases underground. Problem is, the Kerrs say the gases are leaking - and killing animals, contaminating their land and water wells and sending discoloured groundwater to the surface like "shaken soda pop."

There have also been explosions - "like a cannon going off," Jane said - that have blown holes in the side of the Kerr's gravel pit and "all this foaming comes out."

As international experts continue to descend on the scene, one said the "overlying thick cap rock of anhydrite over the Weyburn reservoir is not the impermeable barrier to the upward movement of light hydrocarbons and CO2 that was previously thought."

Hmm. Too bad the Kerrs - let alone Montgomery residents - weren't invited to question the leaders on debate night. Isn't the wisdom of some of these green projects exactly the kind of thing we should be debating during an election campaign?

After all, Saskatchewan is our backyard.

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Prince, or the artist formerly known as the Artist Formerly Known as Prince, is coming to Saskatoon. The pop music legend will play the Credit Union Centre on Dec. 11.

His new tour, Welcome 2 Canada, is his first in the country since 2002. It is the followup to his wellreceived Welcome 2 America tour. Prince is known for such hits as Kiss, Cream and Purple Rain, many of which will be included in his upcoming live shows.

Tickets go on sale through [ticketmaster.ca](http://ticketmaster.ca) on Nov. 4 at 10 a.m. They can also be purchased by calling 938-7800 or visiting a Ticketmaster outlet.

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