

Jones questions premier for failure to investigate wind turbine complaints

By Bill Rea

It's been reported that the Provincial government has not been investigating wind turbine noise complaints, and Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones wants to know why.

She and some of her Progressive Conservative colleagues brought the matter up in the legislature recently during Question Period, in light of a Global News report which stated the Minister of the Environment ignored thousands of complaints between 2006 and 2014.

It's no surprise to me to learn from Global that the minister has failed to investigate noise and health complaints related to industrial wind turbines, Jones told Premier Kathleen Wynne. Liberal ministers have been ignoring homeowners in Dufferin-Caledon for over 10 years.

Jones added she asked the minister to help a family in 2011, after their doctor had recommended they leave their home because of noise and electrical pollution. About two years later, this family received a one-sentence email from the Minister, Jones said according to Hansard.

The ministry has closed your file at this time and the minister will not be taking any action on your complaint, she said the sentence stated.

I am and have been very concerned about the community reaction to the siting of wind turbines, Wynne replied. I met with many groups over a period of years. I sat with them. I listened to their concerns . . . I made sure that we had studies in place.

I made sure that we worked with the federal government as the Health Canada studies were done, she added. We made changes in terms of siting of wind turbines. We gave more responsibility and more authority to municipalities.

We have made changes, Mr. Speaker, based exactly on the concerns that the members opposite are raising, she said.

Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry MPP Jim McDonnell took up the questioning, charging Wynne's minister is either willfully uninformed of the number of complaints about wind turbine noise filed with his department, or deliberately neglectful of his duty.

People across Ontario deserve answers and a resolution to their complaints, he stressed. This government recently stated that, because of the surplus of power, they were cancelling the next round of energy projects. Will the Premier do the honourable thing and order her minister to put an immediate stop to all wind turbine developments until the massive backlog of complaints can be addressed?

We have responded to the concerns of the municipalities, Wynne replied. I take these concerns very seriously.

Niagara West-Glanbrook MPP Sam Oosterhoff charged it was past the time the Premier should be paying attention to the issue. He said hydro bills have increased by more than 300 per cent.

Expensive and counterproductive power subsidies for turbines we don't want or need have contributed to the soaring energy prices that are the greatest burden people are facing, yet this government has ignored the thousands of complaints they've received, he charged. This Liberal government has not paid attention to the many petitions MPPs have presented regarding this issue, nor have they paid attention to their own communities. Some of the 90 unwilling communities are in several of their ridings as well.

Why does the Premier continue to ignore and dismiss everyone's concern? he asked.

That's absolutely not the case, Wynne shot back. I have met with folks in that member's own riding, in Binbrook, and heard their concerns.