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Health official fires back at group

Wind turbines

By JONATHAN SHER THE LONDON FREE PRESS

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A health official who suspects a link between wind turbines and ill health accused a green advocacy group of twisting her words Friday to claim precisely the opposite.

Dr. Hazel Lynn, chief medical officer of health in Huron and Bruce counties, was outraged when the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment sent out a media release that suggested she had disavowed the link.

"It's ridiculous," said Lynn, who estimates between 10% and 15% of people living near turbines in her area say their health has been affected.

It's not clear if turbines cause physical harm or stress that brings on poor health, but concerns are real and need to be examined, she said.

"Many people, in many different parts of Grey Bruce and Southwestern Ontario have been dramatically impacted by the noise and proximity of wind farms. To dismiss all these people as eccentric, unusual, or as hyper-sensitive social outliers does a disservice to constructive public discourse and short-circuits our opportunities to learn and benefit from their experiences as we continue to develop new wind farms," she wrote in a report to her health board.

"It is apparent that a minority of those people living or situated near Industrial Wind Turbines may experience dramatic, negative impacts. We cannot pretend this affected minority doesn't exist. A determination has to be made as to what level or extent of negative impacts is tolerable."

Those findings weren't mentioned by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment when it issued a release that highlighted two lines from Lynn's seven-page report that most people don't complain of ill effects from wind turbines.

"Forty years of science suggests wind turbines do not harm human health," wrote Gideon Foreman, the group's executive director. He linked Lynn's report to a review done last year by Ontario's chief medical officer of health, a review Lynn publicly objected to because it excluded a section on community harm.

"The study found the scientific literature does not demonstrate a direct causal link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects," Foreman wrote.

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