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■ **LETTER:** Turbines need to be carefully sited

Wind better than nuclear, coal power

Editor:

If we take seriously the protection of human health we have to phase out coal and nuclear-powered electricity.

Ontario's coal plants kill hundreds of people and trigger thousands of illnesses (e.g., asthma attacks) annually. Coal is also the most climate-destructive fuel around, emitting twice as much carbon as natural gas does. Whether the issue is respiratory disease or global warming, coal is a catastrophe.

But nuclear is extremely unhealthy as well. A scientific review by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment found all functioning reactors release radioactive materials on a routine basis. A 2008 German government study showed children (younger than five) living within five kilometres of a nuclear plant are at elevated risk for leukemia. And Scientific American recently reported nuclear harm the climate:

"Nuclear power results in up to 25 times more carbon emissions than wind energy, when reactor

construction and uranium refining and transport are considered."

But to phase out conventional power we need to use less energy and switch over to renewables, including wind turbines.

Lately there's been a certain amount of anti-wind sentiment from some Ontarians. This is unfortunate because turbines are a far healthier source of power than their competition.

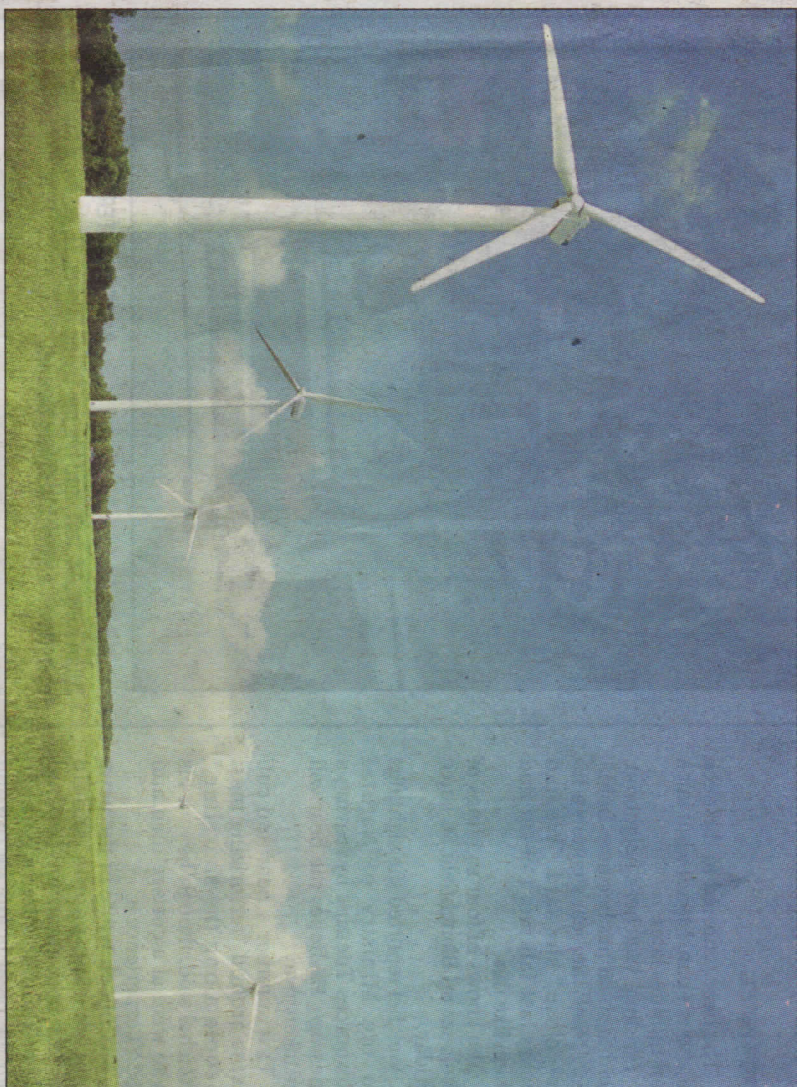
Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, released a memorandum on wind and health in October, 2009. In the document she explains that "while there are anecdotal reports of symptoms such as sleep disturbance, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, concentration and learning problems, and tinnitus, there is no scientific evidence, to date, to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects."

Dr. King also wrote that Dr. Ray Copes, a director at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, released

a scientific review of potential wind turbine hazards in September 2009. That review concluded "there is no evidence of noise-induced health effects at levels emitted by wind turbines; sound produced by wind turbines is sometimes found to be annoying to some people which may result in stress and sleep disturbance."

The verdict: wind turbines are not perfect. They need to be carefully sited and allow for appropriate setbacks. But the current science — as opposed to anecdote — suggests their noise does not threaten human health. Unlike coal, they are not destroying our climate and killing hundreds of Canadians every year. Unlike nuclear, they are not associated with cancer — nor do they condemn the next thousand generations to the menace of radioactive waste.

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Wind turbine noise does not threaten human health, according to current science.