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Winter Update

Lambton County Council acts decisively on Suncor's recent donation through the Cedar Point Wind Project to Lambton County's Creative County Fund

Congratulations to Lambton County Council for continuing to defend its longstanding opposition to local wind farms. The Council did not want this unexpected donation to signal a weakening of our resolve to oppose industrial wind turbine development in Lambton County.

Had the county said nothing, the wind companies planning new wind farms in the county could use that silence as the county backing down from its resolve to gain back our planning powers and to protect the health and safety of residents._

Background

The donation by Suncor and Nextera to the Lambton County's Creative County Fund, administered by the Creative County Committee, was made public with a media release issued on December 8, 2016. This came as a surprise to most members of County Council and to the community.

Link to media release: [Here](#)

Our response to media release: [WAIT-PW letter to the editor](#)

Response from the media: [Dave Dentinger's comment](#) on Blackburn News

The Donation

The donation involves for \$50,000/year for a period of 4 years. Some questions were raised after the announcement and were answered in records obtained through the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

The Problem

Not all County Councilors were made aware a donation was being made by the wind developer and as a result, the democratic process of Council debate was circumvented.

The Solution

At their February 1, 2017 meeting, Council passed a motion proposed by Councilor McCharles that “in the future, donations and financial or policy decisions pertaining to industrial wind turbines be referred to County Council”. The Council also requested staff to prepare a report on the County’s policies and procedures regarding the receipt of charitable donations.

Some comments by Councilors during the [debate](#): (approx. at 49 minute mark)

Gilliland: I happen to be one of the councilors that is on that committee [receiving the funds]...a lot of this information wasn't available to the Council or the committee...I didn't agree with this donation, I thought we should take it to County Council...as a matter of fact, a later motion in our meeting was that we didn't need to talk to County Council about donations - I voted against that because I think that's wrong.

Case: I was caught completely by surprise when I saw through the media that this gift had been given to the Creative County Committee and Warwick Township Council was completely again surprised, and not very happy about the situation...I do welcome the motion and I do appreciate and I hope this never happens again.

Napper: We are unwilling hosts against wind turbines, not Suncor. Our unwilling host stand has lost its integrity. We are in this for the long run, a lot larger projects are coming. Taking this donation says to the wind developers: we will oppose you but just slip us a little money and we'll all go away happy. I was appalled... How can I call a company who does these things a good corporate citizen?

Bradley: I'm more than willing to reaffirm our long-standing position against industrial wind

turbines and the lack of local input in the decision to put them in this community... forget about the past, but this should not have happened.

The Timeline

September 8, 2016: A verbal offer of a donation was made by Suncor to a County staffer.

October 20, 2016: Staff suggested a January 2017 announcement,

October 24, 2016: The Suncor representative states a preference for a December 7 announcement at a leaseholder appreciation dinner to “amplify the message”, and staff agrees.

November 30, 2016: The records indicate that the Creative County Committee was informed of the donation. There are no records indicating when some Councilors first became aware of the donation in isolation from other councilors.

December 7, 2016: The announcement for the donation to the Creative County Fund was made at a private leaseholder appreciation dinner on December 7, 2016 where the formal “check handover” ceremony occurred with a Lambton County Councilor.

Coincidentally, this was the night after the last Community Liaison Meeting where Suncor announced higher than threshold limit raptor kills for the Cedar Point project in 2016, but would not disclose the actual numbers until the report is submitted to the Ministry of the Environment in March, 2017. We will follow up on the bird and bat mortality report.

December 8, 2016: The media release for the donation to the CCF was issued.

January 25, 2017: The sale of Suncor's stake in Cedar Point announced. The perception held by some in the community is that this was a public relations play to dress up the project for potential buyers. Or, perhaps the donation was made to blunt the news of the higher than threshold limit for raptor kills.

February 1, 2017: This issue was raised at the County Council meeting. Council passed a motion that any future donations would be reviewed by Council. The Council also requested staff to review policy with regard to cash donations so that a policy can be applied to all committees of County Council – stay tuned on this particular motion as the result may impact the way Lambton County Council and wind developers interact in the future.

Was it appropriate to engage in these discussions with Suncor without informing the full County Council?

During the period from September 8 to November 30, 2016, there are no records to indicate that any members of Council, other than possibly one Councilor on the Creative County Committee, were aware of, or involved in these discussions. Given the history of the County on the wind turbine issue, this donation should have been brought forward to Council for

debate. If confidentiality was a concern, it could have been carried out in camera.

Suncor sells its stake in Cedar Point

On January 25, 2017, Fiera Infrastructure, an investment firm, acquired Suncor's 50% stake in the Cedar Point wind project for a reported \$100 million.

[Read More](#)

The other partner in Cedar Point wind project, Nextera Canada, will continue as the operator of the project and will be the contact for any issues or concerns from the public.

Any complaints about noise, vibration, shadow flicker, water run-off, etc. should be directed to the Ministry of the Environment's Spills Action Centre toll-free number: 1-800-268-6060.

This number is available 24/7 and has voice mail recording feature. All complaints are forwarded to the project operator, but are otherwise kept confidential. Leave your name, phone number, the time and nature of your complaint.

Remember: if you don't complain then the assumptions of government and the wind developer is that there are no complaints about the project and all is well.

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