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**** For Immediate Release ****

Wolfe Island Residents Speak

Kingston Wind Energy Conference Sheds Light on Project Deficiencies

Kingston — A group of Kingston and Wolfe Island residents convened the “Alternative Wind Energy Concert and Radio Show” last evening to draw attention to serious oversights in the approval of a proposed 86-unit wind turbine project on Wolfe Island, near Kingston Ontario.

The Concert coincided with the 2008 World Wind Energy Conference hosted in Kingston and attended by 600 delegates representing 40 different countries.

“Wind and Wolfe Island go together, we want to be part of the environmental solution,” said Chris Brown, a Wolfe Island resident and member of the project’s Citizen’s Liaison Committee.

“We have faith in a government that wants to do the right thing. The province’s Environmental Assessment guidelines lead us to believe that the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment, and Environment Canada all work together to protect significant species and ecosystems from unintended consequences of siting turbines,” Brown added.

“This project has been bogged down in false accusations of NIMBY’ism and conflicts of interest, and the true path to a resolution has been diverted”, said Sarah Harmer, a Kingston resident and award-winning environmentalist. “That doesn’t have to be the case. We’re calling on the developer and government to first facilitate resolution of siting issues, because surely we are all committed to protecting a Globally Significant Bird area. This provincial government has been a world leader on the environment and it isn’t going to quit on us now,” she added.

Residents see moving some turbines and reducing the density of turbines, which appear to exceed best management practices, as the key to a win/win situation.

“We love wind power and renewable energy as much as anyone, but we know this project, the biggest wind project in Canada, fails many key international standards for siting,” said Sarah McDermott, Wolfe Island resident.

Speakers at the event included lawyer Peggy Smith, Kris Stevens, executive director of the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association and wind project developer Daniel LeBlanc.

Some of the massive 125-metre high turbines are proposed in Provincially Significant Wetlands or in the nesting areas of the short-eared owl, a species of National Special Concern. There are field birds, shore birds, birds on the water, raptors, and more – well over 200 species of bird make their home here or pass through during their migrations. The rotor blades are so massive the arc of the blades rotation is a full acre in diameter.

“Environment Canada and Ministry of Natural Resources are concerned about some turbines posing a disturbance risk to critical habitats, but none of the sites have been changed”, said Sarah McDermott, a Wolfe Island area resident.

“John Gerretsen has shown great leadership in creating the Greenbelt and banning pesticides. We want to make sure the development of this project meets standards we can all agree on, standards that work in Europe to bring renewable energy to market and protect species at risk,” McDermott added.

Numerous government agencies, including the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service have reported that the location of some turbines and the project’s density poses risk to migratory and nesting birds.

The Wolfe Island project originally began as a Community Power project initiated by Hearthmakers Energy Co-op, a local community power organization from Kingston Ontario. This project could be dramatically improved by negotiating a Community Land Lease Agreement that allows for turbines to be moved out of the most sensitive environmental areas without compromising the financial viability of the project or benefits to the participating landowners.

Residents plan to follow the Concert with a letter to the Minister of the Environment seeking clarification and strengthening of the Conditions of Approval for the project.

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