

Community Focus Bulletin: ***Creating Community Conversations***



Prepared by Merriam & Associates

Balancing Sustainable Energy Opportunities While Sustaining Communities: Communities and Solar Farm Development

Communities across the province, the nation and the world are struggling to plan for sustainable sources of energy. At the same time, as a society we are needing to engage more people to become involved in their communities and to be part of the planning of neighbourhoods and the places where they live, work and play. Additionally, we continue to strive to maintain our land base that may be needed for food production (including pasture lands for grazing).

Locally, there are a number of plans to develop solar farms that will provide energy for the future and an alternative to existing sources of energy such as nuclear and oil based products.

A public information meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 28, 2015 (6:30 – 8:30 pm) in the Douro Community Centre. The proponent of the Douro Solar Project is SunEdison Canada (website www.sunedison.ca/Douro). Sun Edison is submitting their proposal for a solar project to IESO (Independent Electricity System Operator – www.ieso.ca) which has put out a call for proposals for large renewable procurement.

To view the “Community Engagement Plan for Proposed Douro Solar Project” go to:

<http://www.sunedison.ca/uploads/documentshare/897/dourocepselletterhead2015jul7original.pdf>

Questions to consider as we plan for the future of our communities

- How can the community consultation process around green energy be changed so that decisions/approvals for solar farms and wind farms address and respect community concerns and community directions?
- Specifically, how can communities be assured that there will be acknowledgement of community concerns and provided with mechanisms to address those concerns?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that when concerns are brought forward from the community, the developers must be required to detail how they will deal with those concerns to the satisfaction of the community?
- How can communities be guaranteed that a project will not proceed if the community does not feel their concerns have been adequately addressed?
- When planning these proposed sites, do you need to ‘ground truth’, that is to have a professional ecologist go on site and confirm the information that is in a proposal is accurate and up to date in relation to the provincial data base of natural heritage information (NHIC)? Has this been done for these local sites?

- Why are separation distances applied only to provincial parks and conservation reserves when there could be other conservation-type areas which should be included in the separation-distance evaluation?
- How is the provincial information on agricultural soils classification factored into the analysis of whether the site is appropriate?

The map below documents the locations of the proposed projects:



Did you know?

Since 1971, the County of Peterborough has experienced a steady reduction in the amount of land reported by farmers as being “farmed” in the County. This land is referred to in the Census of Agriculture as “total area”. Approximately 90,000 acres, or 28% of the land farmed in 1971, is no longer being reported in the Census by farmers.

If the average rate of reduction of farmed acres over the past 40 years is assumed to continue into the future, then another 57,000 acres could be out of production by the time of the Census in 2036. This would bring the reduction of active farmland in the County to a total of 46% over a 65 year period.

(source: “Patterns in the Use and Protection of Farmland in Peterborough County” Prepared for Sustainable Peterborough by Future of Food and Farming Working Group Farmland Task Force, November 2014)

Resources:

www.ofa.on.ca/media/news/put-farmland-first-to-preserve-province's-productivity

<http://www.sunedison.ca/uploads/documentshare/897/dourocepselletterhead2015jul7original.pdf>

www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/landuse/gis/fitmap/31D8.pdf

For more information about our upcoming Community Focus Bulletins go to <http://www.merriam-associates.com/contact-us>

Or email Dawn Berry Merriam at dawnbm@merriam-associates.com or call 705-743-8050.

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