

Vermilion River Stewardship



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4 July 2015

By Email to: Planning Committee
Councillor Fern Cormier
Councillor Lynne Reynolds
Councillor Evelyn Dutrisac
Councillor Joscelyne Landry-Altman
Councillor Deb McIntosh

Re: Proposed MaxLight Solar Project, Kenneth Drive, Val Therese

I am writing on behalf of the Vermilion River Stewardship in regards to the proposed MaxLight LP – Non-Rooftop Solar Project, Kenneth Drive, Val Therese, that is before City of Greater Sudbury's Planning Committee on Monday, 6 July 2015.

The proponent is seeking endorsement through a City of Greater Sudbury Council Resolution of their industrial/commercial 5.5 MW Installed Capacity non-rooftop solar project in a designated residential area, at the E ½ of E ½, Lot 9, Concession 3, Hanmer. Under the Green Energy Act, and its Large Renewable Procurement (LRP) program, the proponent receives priority points for acquiring a Council Resolution for its renewable energy project. Priority points provide the project with a much better chance of receiving an LRP Contract. Once an LRP Contract is received the project is considered to be "a done deal", and there may be an opportunity for the City to provide input in regards to mitigation of potential negative impacts before final approval; however, there is no possibility of a no outcome.

Solar power is not benign, and it could be argued that it is not really green at all. There have been reports of two solar projects adjacent to the Magnetawan River by Northland Power that had serious erosion issues and resulted in major impacts to the river. How will vegetation and weeds be controlled in and around the panels – will toxic herbicides be used? This proposal was originally for 10 MW, then 9, and now the proposal is for 5.5 MW. Renewable energy technology is changing rapidly, and these types of solar farms may be obsolete and/or unnecessary before the 20 year LRP contract expires. There is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the proposal; therefore, it is very premature to endorse it.

It is also important to note that there are no decommissioning provisions required for these renewable energy projects, so it is uncertain who will be on the hook for restoration of the site, and for the disposal of the toxic material contained in the solar panels once the development is no longer viable. While the impacts from solar projects are nowhere near that of coal-fired power plants, photovoltaic modules are made from a witch's brew of toxic chemicals. **Arsenic**,

cadmium telluride, hexafluoroethane, lead, and polyvinyl fluoride are just some of the chemicals used to manufacture the various types of solar cells. Corrosive chemicals like **hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric acid** and **hydrogen fluoride** are used to remove impurities from and clean semiconductor materials. Toxic phosphine or arsine gas is used in the doping of the semiconductor material.

The Vermilion River Stewardship supports green energy projects, as long as they are truly green, and that stakeholders and the community at large support it. However, it has come to our attention that property owners, Cairin Nelson and Michael Cropper, as well as many other stakeholders in the community, are opposed to this project.

A serious problem with the Green Energy Act and Green Economy Act occurs when property owners and other stakeholders in the community have no say in whether a project is approved. Corporations are taking over large tracts of land in residential and agricultural areas with vast numbers of renewable energy projects that will reduce property values, and make resale very difficult, and perhaps impossible. Property owners purchase their homes and land in good faith, relying on zoning bylaws to protect them from industrial monstrosities that would dominate the landscape and devalue their property. Will Council reduce taxes on homes that have been devalued because of these industrial complexes? All this and more must be taken into consideration. The proponent's obligation under the LRP is to inform City Council. It is not necessary for Council to endorse these renewable energy proposals; in fact, it is inadvisable to endorse a proposal without first having all the facts. All the facts will not be known until a full project description and environmental assessment has been completed.

Nowhere in the staff recommendations to the Planning Committee does it mention the name of the property owners, let alone that they are opposed to their land being used for this purpose. I respectfully suggest that the Planning Committee and City Council reject endorsement of any of the renewable energy proposals before them, unless it is a community cooperative that actually has to live with their completed projects and their community. If Council endorses these proposals, it is supporting the province's costly scheme that gives corporations control of private lands, and forces an electricity system onto the public that pays huge bonuses to produce power for peak demand, and then on a regular basis has to give it away or sell it at a substantial loss. By endorsing these renewable energy proposals Council would be supporting a deepening problem of escalating and unaffordable electricity rates. Whatever Council decides, it will send a strong message to those that took the power away from municipalities to make decisions that impact on their own communities.

Additionally, I have visited the proposed site, and this solar project would destroy a wetland and natural forest that supports several endangered species, such as the Whip-poor-will, Blanding's Turtle, Nighthawk, Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Bobolink, and the Eastern White Wolf. These wetlands provide important habitat as well for other valued species, aquatic life, migratory birds, and a variety of wildlife. Wetlands serve to reduce erosion, filter contaminants, and help absorb or buffer the effects of drought and flooding, and these ecosystem services would be lost. This is a beautiful natural forest that provides the kind of lifestyle and natural setting that these property owners were drawn to. These types of projects must be situated on land zoned for industrial use, or on brownfield sites where communities will not be impacted.

We all want green energy, but not when it would remove a wetland and forested area, or the rights of a property owner to decide what will be done with their own property. This would not

July 4, 2015

be “green energy” - we need green energy that respects the wishes of the environment, local stakeholders, and the community.

For all the reasons noted above, the Vermilion River Stewardship supports Cairin Nelson’s submission, and requests that the Planning Committee and Mayor and Council reject this proposal and the request for endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Heron", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Linda Heron
Chair, Vermilion River Stewardship

Cc: Mayor Brian Bigger - Mayor@greatersudbury.ca
City of Greater Sudbury Councillors
Stephen Monet, Manager, Environmental Planning - Stephen.Monet@greatersudbury.ca
France Gelinias, NDP MPP - FGelinias-co@ndp.on.ca
Cairin Nelson - CairinNelson@gmail.com