



## Family fights wind power gag order

*TERRY DAVIDSON, TORONTO SUN*  
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Trisha and Shawn Drennan of Ashfield Township are fighting a gag order to know what they face when wind turbines are put up near their farm. (TERRY DAVIDSON/Toronto Sun)

Nausea, vertigo, ringing in the ears and sleepless nights.

These are things Shawn and Trisha Drennan worry they'll experience should 150 wind turbines be erected near their southwestern Ontario farm.

The closest one is planned for a mere 650 metres from their front door.

When the couple learned of the planned turbines — a project proposed by Capital Power Corp, which already has a handful of turbines in the Drennan's home base of Ashfield Township and the surrounding area — the longtime crofters wondered about the health effects of living close to such technology.

The Drennans tried to talk to former homeowners who had lived close to turbines and who had been paid to move away by other energy companies to make room for more, only to be told by the one-time residents they were under a gag order as part of their respective buyouts.

They were forbidden from saying anything about wind turbines, health effects or otherwise.

Now the Drennans are going to court to try and have the gag clause invalidated, citing the lack of research around those possible health effects.

“We decided to talk to people and government and ask (health-based) questions, and the people most affected can't talk about it,” Sean Drennan said Tuesday from the offices of lawyer Julian Falconer, adding he and wife, however, were able to talk to homeowners living around turbines in nearby Shelburne township and the community of Clear Creek in Norfolk County.

He said some reported suffering from sick stomachs, vertigo and tinnitus — an ever-present ringing in the ears — from the “low-frequency” noise the turbines make.

Falconer, who has been hired by both the Drennans and the community group Safe Wind Energy for All Residents (SWEAR) to fight the gag order, says provincial approval for Capital Power to build the new turbines was a rush job, and the Drennans are being used as guinea pigs.

“We land the turbines first, and then worry about how (people are) affected?” asked Falconer, who questioned how a company could contractually gag people when so much uncertainty exists around the effects of wind turbines.

Farmers in the area are also concerned how the turbines will affect livestock and plants, as well as how the giant propeller-based towers will destroy the rural pulchritude the area is known for, said SWEAR's Patrick Murphy.

“We know there are problems in neighbouring municipalities,” he said, adding concerns around a lack of research are what made the provincial government shelve its plans for offshore turbines earlier this year.

The Grits in February put on hold a multitude of offshore turbine projects, claiming a lack of research around environmental effects.

One particularly controversial project was Toronto Hydro's plan to build around 70 turbines in Lake Ontario that would stretch from Toronto to Ajax. It was strongly opposed by those living close to the lake's shoreline.