

Wind Energy Part 2

Clean wind power available in Caledon

We all want our families to breathe cleaner air but some people find it difficult to make lifestyle changes to reduce their use of electricity and fossil fuels. Others have already made their houses as energy-efficient as they can, and want to go further. There is a great solution to help clean the air: you can buy wind power!

Toronto residents can now buy shares in the new TREC wind turbine at Exhibition Place. We cannot do this yet in Caledon but we can buy Ecologo-certified clean wind power from two turbines in breezy Port Albert and Ferndale on the Bruce Peninsula near Lake Huron. These are huge state-of-the-art turbines that turn slowly and quietly; the larger one has blades 40 meters long.

Buying Green Tags, a clean power premium separate from your hydro bill, supports this wind power. Each tag guarantees that 1000 kilowatt-hours of certified clean energy is put on Ontario's power grid, enough to run an average household for 1-2 months. The wind power producer could sell emissions credits for that power to dirty electricity generators such as coal burners, but your Green Tag purchase ensures that the credit is retired, i.e. it cannot be traded or sold. The owners of the wind farm plan to install more turbines as more Green Tags are sold. In 2002, my office got the equivalent of 20% of its electricity from wind power, and 67% of our home electricity consumption was covered by Green Tags. Eventually, the producers hope that we will have the option to choose clean power on our regular electricity bill.

The Green Tags system is also used in Europe and some U.S. states where dirty industries have an emissions limit. If they cannot meet their target, they can buy Green Tags from clean power generators to make up the difference.

The cost:

Each Green Tag costs \$75 for 1000 kWh of clean power. We taxpayers subsidize nuclear and coal power today, but not wind. It has been estimated that the true cost of conventionally produced electricity is 11-20 cents/kWh, but the consumer only pays 4.3 cents while the rest is added on to Ontario's electricity debt, outstanding from the days of Ontario Hydro - and growing. For example, in December, this artificially low price added \$110 million to Ontario's electricity debt, while the \$75 hydro rebate cheques cost the province \$335 million.

Wind energy currently costs 10-11 cents/kWh to produce, but the producers only get paid around 5 cents. The Green Tag makes up the difference in cost without adding to Ontario's mounting electricity debt.

The payback:

The main reason to do this is for the direct reduction in smog and greenhouse gases, and for the satisfaction of knowing that you are offsetting some or all of your emissions. Mind you, the Ontario Medical Association has estimated that air pollution costs the province \$1 billion annually in health care and lost productivity so we will save in the long run.

The bonus

The more Green Tags we buy, the more wind turbines Sky Generation will install. If they sell 5000 more tags across Ontario, they will install another major turbine by Lake Huron.

The environmental bonus:

Every Green Tag prevents nearly a tonne of CO₂ emissions, as well as other smog and greenhouse gas emissions.

If one of every 4 households in Caledon bought 1 tag, we would be responsible for enough clean power to run over 450 houses and prevent over 4000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, as well as preventing huge amounts of Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxide and Mercury pollution. Sky Generation Inc. will install another turbine and put even more clean power on the grid.

Buying a Green Tag is a great way to apply your \$75 hydro rebate directly to smog reduction. Unlike energy conservation measures, there is no limit to the difference that can be made - other than financial. Some people buy enough Green Tags to offset all their electricity use. There's no need to limit it to electricity; for example, 5 Tags would offset a car driven 20,000 km. Consider encouraging your employer to buy Green Tags. They also make great gifts for people who want to do something about smog.

If you buy 2 tags per year, you will more than meet your share of the Kyoto target. You can do this for your Caledon Countryside Alliance (CCA) Step Up To Kyoto pledge. Please see www.woodrising.com/cca/stepup.htm for more information.

You can buy Green Tags or learn more about them from the Clean Air Clean Energy Project at greenenergy@woodrising.com, 519-927-0548, or from the Green Tags website at <http://www.greentagsontario.com/products.htm>

Dr. Richard Ehrlich
Caledon Clean Air Clean Energy Program



Step Up To Kyoto. Future generations will thank-you a tonne.