

Canadian wind opponents welcome noise study

July 11 2012

(AP) — Opponents of wind farms are hailing Health Canada's decision to study the possible connection between noise generated by the towering turbines and adverse health effects reported by people living close to them.

Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq announced Tuesday that Ottawa will conduct the study, which "is in response to questions from residents living near wind farms about possible [health effects](#) of low-frequency noise generated by wind turbines."

The \$1.8-million study will initially focus on residents in 2,000 dwellings near eight to 12 wind-turbine installations. There are about 140 such land-based wind farms in Canada, most of them in Ontario and Quebec.

Sherri Lange, CEO of North American Platform Against Wind Power said she is encouraged to see the federal government undertaking a study on the safety of wind turbines.

"I hope it will be independent and at an arm's length" from the government, said Lange, whose opposition to [wind farms](#) began with a fight to stop a proposed installation of the energy-producing towers in Lake Ontario, offshore from her east Toronto neighborhood.

The study is being conducted by a team of more than 25 experts in acoustics, health assessment and medicine, including four international advisers.

"Currently, there is insufficient evidence to conclude whether or not there is a relationship between exposure to the noise from wind turbines and adverse human health effects, although community annoyance and other concerns have been reported to Health Canada and in the scientific literature," said Health Canada.

Earlier this year concern about health the health effects of wind turbines proposed for Vermont near the Canadian border helped lead to the cancellation of proposal to build two turbines in Derby Line, across from Stanstead, Quebec.

Lange contends that exposure to low-frequency noise and vibrations — in particular, inaudible infrasound — from [wind turbines](#) can lead to sleep disorders, headaches, depression, anxiety and even blood pressure changes.

"People have to go in their basements to sleep or they have to take a pup tent and sleep in the yard. But they can only go on doing that for so long," she said, noting that up to 40 families in Ontario have left their rural homes as a result of turbines erected nearby.

Lange said she hopes researchers conducting the study will listen to the stories of people, many of them farmers, who say they are suffering ill health linked to wind-energy towers.

"These are ordinary, hard-working people. They would not make up these stories in a million years. They're trying to protect their land, their homes, their children, the legacy that they've built and received from their families."

Health Canada said researchers will be conducting face-to-face interviews with residents, as well as taking physical measurements such as blood pressure and heart rate, and assessing noise levels both inside

and outside some of the homes.

Some residents will be fitted with devices to monitor sleep disturbances for seven consecutive nights, and hair samples will be taken to measure levels of the stress hormone cortisol over the previous 90 days, said a Health Canada scientist involved in the study.

The Canadian Wind Energy Association, representing organizations and individuals involved in the development and application of [wind](#) energy products and services, said scientific evidence "clearly demonstrates" that energy-capturing turbines do not have an impact on human health.

"Health Canada's new study will contribute to the scientific literature and our knowledge base, and we appreciate the opportunity for stakeholders to review the draft methodology and study design and we look forward to undertaking such a review and providing our feedback," president Robert Hornung said in a statement.

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