

Winds of change may be blowing for wind turbines, study suggests

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A new study from Western University shows the winds of change may be blowing when it comes to operating large-scale turbines in rural Ontario.

In "A case-control study of support/opposition to wind turbines: Perceptions of health risk, economic benefits, and community conflict," published recently by *Energy Policy*, Jamie Baxter from Western's Department of Geography and his team explore the conundrum that while a relatively strong majority of rural Ontarians actually living with turbines in their farming communities (69 per cent) support them, the level of positive feedback in the control community was surprisingly low (25 per cent).

Baxter concludes that the results from the control group signal that rural Ontario may, in the future, want to close their doors for business where turbines are concerned and that a more radical retooling may be needed for sustainable [turbine](#) policy.

The findings also contradict the NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) hypothesis, meaning those who don't support turbines locally do not support them generally. In this case, Baxter argues the NIMBY hypothesis is not helpful for understanding why people support/oppose or feel impacted by turbines.

"Health is really front and centre," says Baxter. "Literature suggests that how people feel about the look of turbines in the landscape, aesthetically

speaking, is one of the best predictors of turbine support but that is not the case in our study."

Baxter says key predictors of support expressed in his study include health risk perception, community benefits and general community enhancement. According to the study, support seems conditional amongst those living with turbines as many citizens that are supportive remain concerned about health impacts and the fair distribution of benefits within the local community.

"Majority support could potentially turn on a dime if ongoing issues are not adequately addressed," says Baxter.

In the future, Baxter and his team will continue their research by conducting interviews with residents and establishing more detailed psychosocial outcome measures, benefits preferences and a wider variety of exposure measurements (i.e. noise, spatial juxtaposition of turbines, types of turbines).

More information: [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ...
ii/S0301421513005351](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0301421513005351)

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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