

Wolfe Islanders challenging tax assessments

PROPERTY: Residents claim wind turbines have depreciated the value of their homes

by PAUL SCHLIESMANN, THE WHIG-STANDARD

Some Wolfe Island residents are challenging their tax assessments, claiming that 86 wind turbines installed in the community have hurt property values but a spokesman for the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation says the agency has seen no evidence to support the homeowners' requests.

"It's difficult for us to determine the effects of a wind turbine until they go to sell," said Mike Contant, account manager for eastern Ontario.

"I'm not saying there won't be. It's a fairly new process."

The spokeswoman for Wolfe Island Residents for the Environment said she and her husband have submitted their application for a reduction.

"We specifically referred to the turbines," said Gail Kenney. "We stated that it was an introduction of industrialization into the rural area and that there has been an introduction of industrial noise and industrial lighting into the area."

The turbines have become the centre of controversy on Wolfe Island. Islanders who agreed to have turbines installed on their properties receive about \$7,000 in annual rental fees for each unit. Some of those who didn't say the towering structures have ruined the view and are noisy.

Victoria Stewart watched as two turbines were installed on her neighbours' property, 400 metres and 500 metres from the back of her home. She put her house up for sale in October, found no buyer, and will try again to sell this year. Stewart wonders if the turbines are making it difficult.

She, too, has appealed to assessment corporation, stating that "any increase to my municipal taxes would only be deemed unjust. I'm wondering if we should explore a class-action suit. We can't just sit here and take the depreciation of our land," Stewart said.

"We'll fight our assessments. This could be a one-year process. It could be a five-year process. Until we see changes there's nothing we can do."

Last year there were 165 applications for reconsideration out of the 2,045 properties in the Township of Frontenac Islands.

Kenney said she doesn't expect to win her case.

"I expect we're not going to get anywhere with this appeal but it's on file," she said. "Next year we will file and the next year we will file again to make a point (which) is these wind turbines have not been an asset to all of Wolfe Island and they have detracted from the quality of life."