

## Wynne's green energy putting Ontario in red

By [Jim Merriam](#) Merriam Monday, February 8, 2016 6:34:30 EST PM

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It's to be hoped the Fraser Institute didn't spend much money on its recent study of the fiscal performance of Canada's premiers.

Every resident of Ontario able to sit up and take nourishment -- probably including Warton Willie last week -- has known the study's conclusion for a long time: Premier Kathleen Wynne is doing a lousy job of managing Ontario's economy. Wynne, with the help of her predecessor Dalton McGuinty, has reduced Ontario from a powerhouse to an empty house. On almost every file Wynne's government is found wanting if not severely under water, to borrow a phrase from the mortgage industry.

The worst is energy. The cost of power in the province has forced industries to close and some families to choose between heat and groceries.

A columnist in a Toronto newspaper recently suggested the heat-vs.-food statement is an exaggeration. He should spend a few minutes listening to clients at food banks in rural areas. But I digress.

Much of the high cost of power is associated with renewable energy production.

A new study from the University of Ottawa confirms what we've been saying all along: Ontario brought in wind energy with a "top-down" style that brushed off the worries of communities where the massive turbines now stand.

Stewart Fast, who headed the study, said, "It was a gold rush, basically." Since those involved kept details secret to avoid giving their competitors an edge, residents didn't know what their neighbours were planning.

"That is really the worst way to go about something that you know is going to have a big impact on landscape and people," he said.

In defence of renewable energy, we keep hearing from our urban cousins how much money farmers are earning by allowing turbines on their land. Although true on the surface, there's much more to that equation, said Jane Wilson, president of Wind Concerns Ontario.

Just one question is the impact of the presence of a turbine on the farm owner's financing.

"Some lenders are not happy with a turbine lease because it means the financing for the wind power project takes precedence over other financing arrangements," she said.

The impact on insurance is another consideration since wind turbines bring liabilities.

The most important aspect of rural wind turbines is the impact on neighbours. Families have been divided and lifelong friends are now enemies because of wind turbine controversies.

Wilson said the amount of land taken up by turbines and their infrastructure is usually more than anticipated. Also, other restrictions might be placed on the land.

The fine print in some contracts gives the power company many rights, varying from access roads (which can be 100 feet wide, sitting on a substantial base), to restrictions on new building on the property, to limitations on when the farm owner can apply pesticides.

Also many such contracts contain a clause that requires non-disclosure so the landowner cannot speak about any of the lease arrangements and often must agree not to complain about noise, vibration, flashing lights, etc.

Lease agreements allow for an automatic renewal for another 20, even 40 years, with the wind power company retaining first right of refusal for any sale of the property.

As one Ontario mayor put it, when you signed that lease, you basically sold your farm for the lease amount.

"There is also the unmeasurable cost of the landowner's place in his or her community: leasing land for huge industrial-scale power equipment will have an effect on the entire community, not just the individual."

With those considerations, is the lease money more than a pittance?

[jmerriam@bmts.com](mailto:jmerriam@bmts.com)