

Dramatic increase in local opposition to proposed industrial wind turbines in Somerset and Yates

Local opposition to a proposed industrial wind turbine project in the towns of Somerset and Yates has increased significantly according to a [new survey](#) commissioned by Save Ontario Shores, Inc. (SOS).

83% of the residents who participated in the survey in late August and early September said they were opposed to the Lighthouse Wind project, which calls for the construction in the two Lake Ontario shoreline communities of 47, 600 foot+ tall turbines that include 240-foot long blades.

In 2015, the Town of Somerset's survey showed that 67% of respondents were opposed to the project; SOS's survey in Yates that year showed 78% were opposed.

"After five years, any lingering doubts about the level of opposition to this project has evaporated," said SOS President Pam Atwater. "Governor Cuomo and project developer Apex should look very closely at these survey results and acknowledge that the project is not acceptable to our communities."

The respondents also said they opposed industrial wind projects in the Great Lakes because of the negative impact it will have on fishing and boating (78% concerned); the legacy pollutants (chemicals remaining in the environment long after they were first brought into use) (78% concerned); and the number of birds and bats that would be killed by industrial wind turbine blades operating in the lake (84% concerned).

"Enough is enough! Each town, not the state, should decide for itself how best to contribute to a more sustainable future that is in harmony with the values and character of each community," said Town of Yates Supervisor Jim Simon. "Our town is working with local farmers on the possibility of a renewable energy biodigester to convert cow manure into biogas. This initiative is proof that a community can contribute to the governor's renewable energy goals while staying true to its rural character and residents' desires."

"Our town as well as all towns should be able to decide what is best for our community and residents, not the state," said Town of Somerset Supervisor Jeff Dewart. "There is an 1,800-acre industrial site in Somerset that is closed. It would be a good place to put a solar farm and a data center, along with a multi-use site including a park for our town. This would demonstrate that our community is contributing to the governor's renewable goals."

An overwhelming number, 89%, oppose legislation approved early this year by New York State giving Albany substantial power to rapidly review, evaluate and permit the siting of industrial wind turbine and solar energy projects with decreased opportunity for public or local municipality input.

Recent studies have estimated that using industrial wind and solar projects to meet the governor's renewable energy goals will require hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Upstate New York, which currently produces 88% of its electricity from zero emissions generation (largely hydro-electric and nuclear). Downstate uses 70% fossil fuel generated electricity. 88% of the survey participants said Upstate New York was being asked to bear an unfair burden in order to meet the governor's energy goals.

This survey is released as Governor Cuomo's renewable siting office has draft regulations and standards that when finalized will decrease citizen and municipal voices and options, will lighten requirements for developers and speed up the siting process for projects so large that they will change the character of a region. Out of state developers profit at the expense of rural communities, rural habitat and wildlife in Upstate New York that is already saturated with zero emissions electricity.

"This is not just an assault on local rule it's an all-out declaration of war by the governor," said Yates Town Board Member John Riggi.

86% of the respondents support establishing local moratoriums to study and develop standards for battery storage safety and transmission line construction before any new industrial wind and solar projects are constructed.

2,148 surveys were mailed to Somerset and Yates residents; 31% were returned to the Buffalo accounting firm Lumsden & McCormick, LLP, which tabulated the results. The survey margin of error is +/- 3%.

"We are calling on Governor Cuomo to explore alternative ways to reach statewide climate goals, and not force massive industrialization on communities like Somerset and Yates whose residents clearly do not want them and whose environment, economy and community character would be harmed by them. He should be developing an energy policy that brings together New Yorkers, not one that tears communities apart," Atwater said.

Read the [complete survey](#) and resident responses.