

Fighting wind

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Chantelle Bryson spoke at the Thunder Bay Municipal League conference on March 1, 2013. (Jeff Labine, tbnewswatch.com)

Chantelle Bryson is accusing Horizon Wind Inc. of using bully tactics in an attempt to force its application to build a wind farm on the Nor'Wester mountain range forward.

Meanwhile, Fort William First Nation Chief Peter Collins said he'll fight the project tooth-and-nail.

Bryson, a Thunder Bay lawyer, made her statement on Friday during a presentation to the Thunder Bay District Municipal League conference. Horizon filed a notice of application for judicial review against the Ontario Ministry of the Environment early last month.

In its notice of intent, the Toronto-based company accused the province of delaying the renewal energy application approval process, a step it needs to start building turbines.

Horizon has until Sept. 2, 2014 to have at least one turbine built, under terms agreed to with the City of Thunder Bay.

Bryson, representing herself, said she'd prefer the province take its time and get it right.

"Once it is deemed complete, the rest of the process is a foregone conclusion," Bryson said.

"It is over. There's no room to maneuver. Once it is deemed complete it is just borrowing without substance."

Upon completion, the ministry will post the application for a period ranging from 30 to 60 days where people can then comment on the REA. Once the posting period ends, the ministry will make its final decision on the application.

Bryson added the application makes "scandalous allegations" against Fort William First Nation, which has voiced strong opposition against the project.

The province maintains Horizon has not properly consulted with Fort William First Nation, which is why the REA approval has not been granted.

Collins agreed, saying the band still has plenty of questions for the company before making a decision on the project.

"Our members were saying that we weren't duly consulted," he said.

"One of the things I always told Horizon and their representative is every meeting that they come to at the council level is not deemed as consultation to our members. We have a responsibility to all of our members and our organization so that they can hear firsthand about the impacts about the wind development in our territory."

Collins said they are looking at obtaining intervenor status relating to the litigation suits against the MOE. This would allow all of the community's concerns to be heard at a public forum.

Collins wasn't sure why Horizon decided to file a litigation suit, but at the end of the day he said they are going to fight the project.

"Our community is going to take every step and every action to stop this wind farm from being developed," he said.

In an email, Horizon Wind spokeswoman Kathleen MacKenzie said the company has always dealt directly with residents instead of going through the media.

“We respect Fort William First Nation and did not proceed with the Big Thunder Wind Farm until we had obtained a signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Band in 2007,” she said in the email.

“Over the course of the project's development we have consulted with Fort William First Nation. As a result of these consultations, we moved our turbines further away from Loch Lomond lake, and conducted special studies which showed that the Big Thunder Wind Park would harm neither the Loch Lomond watershed nor the moose population in the area. Horizon has always invited and continues to invite an open dialogue with FWFN now and through the life of the project.”

She added that she hopes that Horizon’s recent application for judicial review will resolve outstanding issues and allow the company’s project to move forward to everyone’s satisfaction.

