

Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta

Neil McCrank
Chairman
Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB)
June 26, 2006

An Open Letter to the Board and the Government of Alberta

Alberta Natural Heritage Legacy Under Siege and Defenseless

Dear Mr. McCrank:

We, the undersigned, are dismayed by the lack of responsibility shown by the Energy and Utility Board in its Decision 2006-052. After hearing the concerns of 150 ranchers and landowners in Chain Lakes about the impacts of piecemeal development, the EUB, once again, ignored Albertans and rubber stamped another well in one of the province's most historic landscapes. The EUB disregarded Board policies that clearly call for public debate and environmental planning. And in so doing, has gone against its own mandate, and defied the expressed interests of all Albertans. In short, it was business as usual with the Board.

We, however, worked within your regulatory system and did everything that you asked. When we raised concerns about the piecemeal fragmentation of critical watersheds and grasslands in the eastern slopes by oil and gas drilling, you told us to form groups. And so we did: The Pekisko Group, The Livingstone Landowners Group, The South Porcupine Hills Stewardship Association. Then you told us to hold information meetings. We took your advice, held meetings, and hundreds of concerned landowners attended. We talked about water, native grasses and the future of the West. Then you encouraged us to talk to oil and gas companies and again we listened. We sat down with companies and discussed best practices.

But when Compton Petroleum Corporation proposed an 880 well gas project in the Porcupine Hills over 110 sections of the least drilled landscape in the province, we turned to the Board for help. You said, don't worry, "The eastern slopes are special." We consulted your guidelines and then respectfully asked you to comply with your 1993 Eastern Slopes policy (IL 93-9). It called for public consultation; area development plans; environmental assessments and no piecemeal fragmentation of the land.

But then you told ranchers, municipalities and conservationists that they weren't directly or adversely affected. In fact you informed families that had lived on the land for three generations that they had "no standing" simply because they didn't live 300 metres from the first exploratory well. We contested your narrow definitions and forced a one-day public hearing in Chain Lakes on April 11, 2006.

But Decision 2006-052 ignored our concerns as well as your own stated policy. As a result, the Pekisko Group, the Livingstone Landowners Group, the South Porcupine Hills Stewardship Association and the Alberta Wilderness Association will advise their membership and supporters of the following truths:

First, the regulatory system in this province has become irreparable and no longer represents the interests of ordinary Albertans or the rights of surface owners.

Second, the EUB refuses to uphold its own guidelines that clearly recognize the ecological importance of the Eastern Slopes. The southern foothills, among many key biological services, provide and safeguard water for the Canadian prairie including the cities of Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Saskatoon.

Third, that the current policy of liquidating oil and gas resources as quickly as possible is destroying agricultural communities; wildlife diversity; recreational tourism; and signature landscapes along the Cowboy Trail. Together the Board and the government are erasing Alberta's single greatest brand: it's land and heritage.

We repeat: the regulatory system as represented by the EUB is broken, and it now threatens the future of Alberta's water, land, and traditional economies.

The government and the regulator can no longer sit by and do nothing while unplanned and uncontrolled industrial activity threatens our watersheds and rural communities.

It is time for the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board to lead or get out of the way.

It is time for a political debate on how to reform the regulatory system.

And it is time to give rural Albertans a voice in the process.

Sincerely,

Ian Tyson, Pekisko Group

Mac Blades, Pekisko Group

John Lawson, Livingstone Landowner's Group

Bill Newton, South Porcupine Hills Steward Association

Vivian Pharis, Alberta Wilderness Association

