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Proposed Wind Turbines On Edge of Cypress Hills Park Will Destroy Rare Native Grasslands

THE ISSUE

West Windeau, a wind power development company, is seeking approval and a government subsidy to build a large wind farm adjacent to Cypress Hills Inter-Provincial Park (CHIPP) in a buffer area of native grassland known as the Fringe. The project is now being assessed by Natural Resources Canada. In this case, the site for the proposed project is inappropriate for industrial development because the area comprises rare native grassland, of which there is little left in Alberta.

THE BACKGROUND

Although AWA supports the idea of alternative energy development, such development is not always as "green" as it may appear. We believe that the CHIPP Fringe Area next to Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park is an inappropriate site for industrial development such as that proposed by West Windeau for the following reasons:

- Because of Cypress Hills' topography as a watershed, during the severe and extended droughts of 5,000 to 7,500 years ago they functioned as a refuge for hundreds of species that now occur separately and far removed from their original populations. As an ecological island in the midst of an ocean of grassland, the Hills' species are more biologically vulnerable than larger, continuous areas, and *a protected buffer zone is critical to their continued protection.*
- In addition to their nationally important ecological value, the Cypress Hills have important aesthetic, heritage and recreational values, from evidence of prehistoric mammals and ancient campsites to stunning vistas and beautiful hiking trails. Industrial development in the Fringe Area will seriously impact these values.
- The viewscapes from the Hills, the silence, and the sense of undisturbed landscape are incomparable treasures of great public value. These should not be compromised for an industrial development that could be placed in more appropriate locations on land that is already disturbed. Such locations have equal or greater potential for economically viable wind farms.
- Public monies must not be used to degrade a public asset such as Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and its surrounding area. Since it is not necessary to compromise this nationally significant gem, it would show an absence of long-term vision and an irresponsible use of tax dollars.

Alternatives to petroleum development are critical for the long-term economic and environmental health of this province, but sacrificing our last remnants of native prairie for what is being falsely billed as "green energy" is unacceptable.

THE ACTION

AWA urges you to write to Natural Resources Canada, which is now assessing West Windeau's application, to express your opposition to the proposal. AWA would appreciate a copy of your letter for our files. Please send your letter to the following:

Ms. Suzanne La Perriere
Environmental Assessment Officer
Natural Resources Canada
580 Booth St.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0E4

Mr. Doug Bowes
Manager, Policy & Land Use Planning
Tourism, Parks, Recreation & Culture
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