

From: [Alberta Wilderness Association](#)
To: awa.nd@shaw.ca
Subject: AWA Wilderness & Wildlife Defenders - Potatogate
Date: October-19-10 4:07:02 PM

Alberta Wilderness Association

October 19, 2010

Great Horned Owl Banner.jpg

Dear Nigel,

In all of AWA's years of defending Wild Alberta, we have rarely come across a case as blatant or as offensive as 'Potatogate.' In a shocking abuse of trust, the Alberta government is secretly preparing to sell off 25 sections (16,000 acres) of public land – land that belongs to you and me – to a private developer. The land, near Bow Island, is slated to be ploughed up to grow potatoes, despite the fact that it is known to be home for a number of threatened and endangered species.

Due to the secretive nature of the process, which has taken place entirely behind closed doors, the land sale is close to being finalized. Please consider writing to the Premier, before it is too late, asking him to stop this sale of our public land.

- Nigel Douglas, AWA Conservation Specialist

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ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE HABITAT
TO BE PLOUGHED
UP TO GROW
POTATOES

AWA
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POTATOGATE SECRETIVE SALE OF OUR PUBLIC LAND - ENDANGERED WILDLIFE HABITAT TO BE PLOUGHED UP TO GROW POTATOES

Background

The Alberta government is secretly preparing to sell off 25 sections (16,000 acres) of public land – native prairie, known to be home to a number of threatened and endangered species – to a private developer. The land, near Bow Island, is slated to be ploughed up to grow potatoes, despite the fact that it is predominantly native prairie and is known to be home for a number of species listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act*.

There has been no opportunity for public input, despite the fact that this land is public land, supposedly managed by the Alberta government on behalf of all Albertans.

The Issue

AWA has two fundamental objections to the proposed land sale. Firstly the sale would see the permanent destruction of threatened native grasslands, habitat for endangered wildlife; and secondly it would involve the secret sale of our public land, with no opportunity for public comment.

There is no doubt about the natural values of the land in question. It is native grassland, known to be habitat for a number of endangered species (including burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, McCown's longspur, short-eared owl, and long-billed curlew). Native grasslands are a threatened habitat in Alberta. More than 70% of Alberta's native grassland has already been lost, and less than 1% of Alberta's Grassland Natural region is currently protected. And yet grasslands are home to 70% of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian species considered *at risk* or *may be at risk* in the province.

The land is also public land: land that belongs to you and me. And yet the deal

appears to be going ahead with zero opportunity for public input. In a recent radio interview, Sustainable Resource Development Minister, Mel Knight commented "There never is a requirement for public consultation with respect to the sale of public land for agricultural use. This has been going on in Alberta since before it was a province and there never has been public consultation to my knowledge." Mr. Knight shamelessly referred to this as doing business "in an open and transparent manner."

AWA believes that public lands should not be sold. And certainly not without a full and public process that allows for Albertans to comment on the values of the land. This land sale must be halted before irreversible damage is done.

Take Action

We have heard informally that a cabinet decision is imminent. The government has already received opposition from a broad range of individuals and organizations, including land trusts, hunters, grazers, biologists and environmentalists. The Alberta Wild Rose Alliance and Alberta Liberal parties have already expressed their opposition!

Please write as soon as you can. [Click here](#) to see AWA's letter to the Premier, sent September 15.

Comments can be mailed to:

The Hon. Ed Stelmach
Premier of Alberta
Room 307, Legislature Building
10800 – 97th Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Email: premier@gov.ab.ca

Honourable Mel Knight,
Minister of Sustainable Resource Development,
#404 Legislature Building,
10800 97 Avenue,
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2B6
Email: grandeprairie.smoky@assembly.ab.ca
SRD.PLAR@gov.ab.ca

Please also send copies of your comments to us at awa.nd@shaw.ca
Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action

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