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RANCHERS CALL FOR MORATORIUM ON SOUTHEASTERN SLOPES
Survey shows 74 per cent of Albertans in favour

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Calgary, Alberta – Ranchers of the Pekisko area south of Longview are calling for a moratorium on oil and gas development on the Southeastern Slopes of the Rockies. They are concerned about potential, irreparable damage that will be caused by a proposed Petro-Canada pipeline through pristine wilderness in Kananaskis Country.

A solid majority of Albertans support their cause, according to a recent Leger Marketing province-wide survey. Roughly three-quarters (74 per cent) of Albertans agreed that the government should “put a moratorium on any further oil and gas development until the provincial government has finalized a land use framework to plan and balance future development for this sensitive region.” (See attached summary.)

Petro-Canada is applying to drill sour gas wells and build 56 kilometres of pipeline, which will cross 72 water courses in the Willow Creek and Pekisko Creek drainage areas of Kananaskis Country. This is a key watershed for the driest regions of Southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana and one of the few remaining undisturbed and pristine areas of the Southeastern Slopes. The area proposed for the pipeline is currently inaccessible by vehicle. Ranchers are concerned that the roads and the access ways which will result from the proposal, will lead to increased ATV use and damage to this key watershed.

“The potential impact of this pipeline goes far beyond the miles of trenches. Everywhere a pipeline has been built, it’s been followed by weeds, motorbikes, ATVs, trespass, clearcuts, more wells, more roads, and more industrialization,” says Mac Blades, president of the Pekisko Group. “Long experience has shown us that you can’t bring back our water, wildlife, wildlands or the native grasses, after they’ve been torn up and fragmented.”

Over the years, the whole of the Eastern Slopes has been recognized for its importance as the functional water tower for southern Alberta. In 1977, the Lougheed government passed a Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes. Experts have stated that development of the proposed pipeline will damage watersheds and creeks which are home to Alberta’s provincial fish, the Bull Trout, recognized as a ‘species at risk’ by the Ministry of Sustainable Resources and Development.

Generations of Albertans have lived on this land, and still do. They exemplify a long tradition of quality land stewardship. Working neighbor-to-neighbor and with local government, they’ve kept this land thriving, beautiful and productive.

“Our traditional way of life and the cultural fabric of this country depend on maintaining and conserving this watershed to protect our vast open spaces and working landscapes. Our rural families and communities are rooted in and dependent on these landscapes,” says Blades. “For an outside corporation to dismiss those values for short-term windfall profits is not only disrespectful, but undermines all that hard-working people have invested in for generations.”

The hearing for Petro-Canada’s application will begin on November 12, 2008 in High River. Go to http://www.ercb.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_201_0_0_35/http%3BercbContent/publishedcontent/publish/ercb_home/industry_zone/applications/notices/energy_issues/2008/1520388_reschld.aspx for more information on the application and hearing.

To learn more about the area in question please visit www.pekisko.ca

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