

Peace Energy looks to fund small wind demo project

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DAILY NEWS

The Peace Energy Cooperative wants the Peace River Regional District to help it get government funding for a small-scale, wind energy demonstration project which would promote renewable energy.

The project would install up to four turbines of five to 100-watts at "strategic" locations in the South Peace. In a letter to the board it lists the Gwillim Lake Outdoor Education Camp owned by School District 59; a local industrial wood products manufacturer; several local ranchers or farmers; Northern Lights College; and the City of Dawson Creek.

"All costs for the installation, operation, and maintenance would be closely monitored, as would electrical output," cooperative president Steve Rison said in a letter to the board. It was essential to the project, he said, that any surplus electricity be fed back through the electrical meter to BC Hydro's distribution grid.

On Thursday, at their regular meeting, PRRD directors approached the request cautiously, and asked to look at detailed plans from the group before forwarding it along to the Northern Development Initiative Trust for possible funding. Many wanted proof the

public benefits would outweigh the huge costs that would be involved.

"Shouldn't we actually see letters of support from these potential participants," chair Karen Goodings said in reference to the proposed demonstration sites. "They would be receiving a benefit if these turbines produce the electricity. But there's going to be a huge amount of investment required and my understanding is the return on investment wasn't there unless the Kyoto Tax Credits were also available, which is being slowly nibbled away at."

A delegation of Peace Energy and Aeolis officials did appear at a previous PRRD meeting to update directors on their proposed wind park project on Bear Mountain. At that time, they said they would be going after the environmental tax credits if successful.

Area E director Tim Caton said PRRD support of the project might be seen as playing favorites with public funds.

"I have ranchers in my area that have already spent upwards of \$20,000 in solar panels to pump water from various places to be environmentally friendly and without any assistance from NDI or any small company to test anything... That's just my concern," Caton said.

Chetwynd director and mayor Evan Saugstad said under new NDIT procedures, applicants had to fill out an application form which the cooperative could download from the NDIT's website.

"With that submission there should be a letter of support from a local government that says if it's approved that local government would be willing to sponsor it and look after the money," said Saugstad, who represents the board as chair of the Northeast Regional Advisory Committee which forwards funding requests to the NDIT.

Directors voted to invite the cooperative to a board meeting with the additional information.