

## Alberta regulators free the wind

### Electric power generation cap removed

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CALGARY - The Alberta government and its electric system operator are lifting a controversial cap on wind power generation that critics say has stymied growth in the province of one of the fastest-growing sources of power in the world.

"It's removing the threshold," said Alberta Electric System Operator spokesperson Ally Taylor of an event today that will see Alberta Energy Minister Mel Knight and AESO chief executive Dale McMaster announce the change and next steps for potential generation projects.

Further transmission expansion in Alberta's southeast may be part of those plans.

Generation industry officials said Tuesday they were delighted with the decision.

"We applaud the government and the AESO for lifting the cap," said Evan Bahry, executive director of the Calgary-based Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta.

"We are in a market where we believe anyone should be free to invest here as long as they can build efficient plants and are prepared to compete in our marketplace."

Bahry noted that Alberta is blessed with many excellent sites for wind generation, characterized by generally steady winds in the southwest portion of the province around Pincher Creek and Taber. Early next month, for example, City of Calgary-owned Enmax Corp. will officially open an approximately 80-megawatt wind farm in the Taber area.

"We have a phenomenal wind resource in this province, one of the strongest documented anywhere. We've had great success in attracting facilities and it's obviously technology that consumers respond to," said Bahry.

"With demand for wind power in an open market, customer choice is very important. This will help Alberta maintain its national leadership in the wind power industry."

Alberta has historically been Canada's leader in wind power generation, but is set to be overtaken by other jurisdictions, including Ontario and Quebec, where massive wind power generation construction plans are underway.

Although as a renewable wind power is highly valued by environmentalists, it is not benign, with the potential to alter local wind and climate patterns and to be lethal to birds. It also almost always relies on government subsidies, consumer surcharges, or

both to be economic.

The decision by the government and the AESO to remove the cap rather than to simply raise it from its 900 megawatt current level suggests windpower advocates have won the debate about completely freeing the rapidly growing power source.

"This was a complicated issue for the AESO to resolve. Lifting the cap is a good thing," said Bahry.

In May 2006, the AESO imposed a 900- megawatt cap on wind power generation, citing inadequate transmission and fears the intermittent nature of wind power could destabilize the provincial grid system if it's heft on the system became too weighty.

The 900-megawatt threshold was chosen because it reflected roughly 10 per cent of Alberta's generating capacity, however proportions in other jurisdictions, including some European countries, reach as high as 25 per cent. That target was set to be met as early as next year and had prompted vociferous cries from the wind generation industry to lift the cap.

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