

June 16, 2026

To: Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions, Hon. Adrian Dix, ECS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Subject: Sandhill Cranes at risk with proposed Nicola Wind Project

Dear Minister Dix,

BC Nature is a province-wide, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and protection of British Columbia's natural heritage. Representing a network of 66 naturalist societies and nature conservation groups, with a combined 7000+ members across the province, BC Nature works to advance science-based conservation, protect species at risk, and promote responsible stewardship of ecosystems. Through research, advocacy, education, and collaboration, we strive to ensure that biodiversity conservation remains a central consideration in land and resource decision-making across British Columbia.

BC Nature recognizes the important role that renewable energy, including wind power, plays in addressing climate change. At the same time, we are concerned about the recent rescinding of environmental assessments for nine wind energy projects approved by the Province of British Columbia. In particular, we are gravely concerned about the likely impacts of the recently approved 71-turbine Nicola Wind Project in the hills west of West Kelowna and east of Douglas Lake.

The exact location of the turbines has not been revealed but media reports indicate this will be in the path of the largest migratory route for Sandhill Cranes (*Antigone canadensis*) in B.C. If your government allows construction of these turbines without any environmental impact assessment, we are confident that there will be unnecessary mortality and disruption of this migration corridor to follow.

One of our federated clubs, the Nicola Naturalist Society, based in Merritt, has been conducting surveys of migrating Sandhill Cranes on the Douglas Lake Plateau during the spring migration for over 10 years, including daily counts in 2024 and 2025. The project has been overseen by Dr. Alan Burger, a career ornithologist. The results of this monitoring have been published in a peer-reviewed journal and are available here: www.nicolanaturalists.ca/files/Burger-2025-SaCranes-BCBirds.pdf

Additional supporting data are available here: www.nicolanaturalists.ca/projects/sandhill-crane-surveys-on-the-douglas-lake-plateau/

The results of these surveys show that more than 20,000 Sandhill Cranes, and likely closer to 25,000, traverse the hills between the Okanagan Valley and Douglas Lake on their annual spring migration. This route takes them across the proposed area for the Nicola Wind Project. It is well documented that wind turbines pose a risk to cranes of fatal collisions and disruption of migration flights. Here are some supporting publications:

Gerber, B.D., et al. 2020. Sandhill Crane (*Antigone canadensis*), version 1.0. in A.F. Poole (ed.). Birds of the world. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York.
<https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.sancra.01>

Navarrete, L., and K.L. Griffis-Kyle. 2016. Sandhill Crane collisions with wind turbines in Texas. Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop. 12:65–67.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nacwgproc/380>

Pearse, A.T. et al. 2021. Ecological Applications 31(5):e02324.

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/eap.2324>

No one wants to see images of dead cranes underneath wind turbines, but that is very likely if the Nicola Wind Project is allowed to proceed without a detailed assessment of its impacts combined with professionally-supported mitigation to avoid impacts on Sandhill Cranes. At present the exact migration routes of these cranes are not known and that needs to be the starting point for research into this mitigation.

Killing cranes is an offense under the federal Migratory Birds Convention Act. The project proponents and supporting government agencies are therefore liable to litigation should this occur in the Nicola Wind Project. The lack of any environmental assessment and mitigation is likely to increase the risks of conviction under this act.

BC Nature therefore recommends that the Government of British Columbia take the following actions:

1. Require a full environmental assessment for the Nicola Wind Project before construction proceeds, including a detailed assessment of potential impacts to Sandhill Cranes, other migratory birds, grassland ecosystems, and other wildlife values in the project area.
2. Require full disclosure of proposed turbine locations and associated infrastructure, including access roads, transmission lines, staging areas, and other project components, so potential impacts to Sandhill Crane migration routes and sensitive habitats can be properly evaluated.
3. Require independent, science-based migration studies before final project approval, including surveys to identify Sandhill Crane flight paths, altitude, timing, stopover areas, weather-related movement patterns, and collision-risk zones.
4. Use the Nicola Naturalist Society's long-term Sandhill Crane monitoring data as part of the assessment process, and ensure that local scientific expertise, Indigenous knowledge, and community-based observations are meaningfully incorporated into project review and mitigation planning.
5. Require professionally-supported mitigation measures to avoid harm to Sandhill Cranes, including turbine relocation, project redesign, seasonal curtailment, no-build buffers, or other measures where migration routes or high-risk flight areas are identified.
6. Pause any construction or site preparation that could affect Sandhill Cranes or their migration corridor until the environmental assessment, migration studies, and mitigation planning have been completed and made available for public review.
7. Apply the same standard of environmental review to other wind energy projects in British Columbia where there is potential risk to migratory birds, species at risk, sensitive habitats, or important wildlife movement corridors.
8. Ensure that clean energy development proceeds in a way that protects biodiversity, supports climate action, respects Indigenous rights and knowledge, and avoids preventable wildlife mortality.

We also call on the Upper Nicola Band, a partner in this project, to support a full environmental assessment. Members of Upper Nicola were heavily involved, as contractors and as volunteers, in the Nicola Naturalist Society's crane monitoring over many years.

Clean energy should not come at the cost of wildlife mortality and environmental degradation.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harold Sellers", written in a cursive style.

Harold Sellers
President, BC Nature (Federation of B.C. Naturalists)

CC. Minister of Environment & Parks, Hon. Tamara Davidson ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca
CC. Chief Daniel Manuel, Upper Nicola Band chief@uppernicola.com
CC. President Nicola Naturalist Society, Dr. Alan Burger nicolanaturalists@gmail.com