

Opinion Presented to the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE)

Project : Parc éolien de Grosse-Île

Location : Îles de la Madeleine

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1. Introduction

I am submitting this opinion as a concerned citizen of Grosse-Île. The purpose of this brief is to express my position regarding the proposed wind energy development project and to address the question of social acceptability, community well-being and heritage impacts.

Public consultation is not merely a procedural requirement- it is a democratic obligation. The legitimacy of any large-scale project rests not only on regulatory compliance but on meaningful social consent. I therefore trust that the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement will give careful consideration and priority to citizens' voices.

2. Social Acceptability

Social Acceptability must be demonstrated, not presumed. Social acceptability cannot be based on:

- Supplementary public consultations aiming to acclimatize citizens
- Anticipation of an outcome in which social acceptability will eventually be obtained
- Hypothetical assumptions about how the community will feel in the future or *if* it will feel differently in the future

Grosse-Île is a small community of 464 residents (*Statistique Canada 2021*), considering that approximately 300 of which are adult taxpayers. A petition with nearly 200 resident signatures recently submitted to the Municipality of Grosse-Île in December 2025, requested a referendum in clear opposition to the wind farm project. The petition remains in circulation and is gaining strength within the community. Approximately 25 residents were in attendance during the preliminary BAPE hearing, many of them expressing concern in required question format, including myself.

Public opinion has thus far proven to be inconsistent with the past internal municipal decisions that have allowed the project to move forward negligibly. The gap between legislative action and community consensus warrants scrutiny whereas a significant portion of the residents feel unheard, pressured, and inadequately informed. Furthermore, Grosse-Île residents do not feel that they were properly solicited, consulted and included in the participation of the decision-making process. There is a fundamental disparity between the community and the projects development framework, which prioritizes industrial use over collective view.

As a part of the current generation, I was not of appropriate age to participate in many municipal decisions made in the past concerning windmills (dating as far back as 2007), yet I am the one who

inherits their consequences today. I feel it is my duty to use this final opportunity to be the voice for my children and for future generations: to safeguard the environment so that they can experience it as I have.

3. Proximity: Community Well-being

A perceived loss of control over one's immediate environment can create community division and stress. These turbines are going to be located close to homes meaning these individuals will be imposed upon, marginalized, and economically disadvantaged (*ex property values; loss of equity or face longer selling times*).

Setback distances should reflect precaution, not minimal legal thresholds. Regulatory compliance does not automatically equal community comfort. With a setback of only 3 km, one can only imagine the intrusion and the visual impact alone affecting especially the closest residents of Grosse-Île to the turbine locations. Regulatory distance zones claim that health impacts are minimal, however they still erode residents' sense of peace, privacy, and enjoyment of their property. The proposed wind turbines would dominate the sky for community members from Grosse Île Point to Grosse-Île North, obstructing one of the most breathtaking views with the setting sun in the west.

Quality of life cannot be measured solely in decibels.

4. Culture and Heritage

The second largest economic pillar for the Magdalen Islands is tourism; driven in part by the unique scenery and landscape in its wild, untouched, natural state. The raw beauty and natural abundance of our Islands are part of our history and it's the reason why our ancestors settled here. It remains to this day a magnet for so many newcomers, visitors and tourists each year. Tourism will be impacted by this visual pollution, but Islanders are the ones who are left to face the inescapable permanence even after the tourism season has ended. Wind turbines mar the landscape; they are a blight on the scenery and detract from the surrounding natural beauty. These intrusive, looming structures impose an unattractiveness that simply cannot be ignored as they completely break the natural harmony of our unique coastlines, dunes and marshes that are already so fragile.

Grosse-Ile will have a reduced competitive advantage compared to the rest of the Islands. Guests may avoid properties with visible turbines and in turn will reduce income for local hosts and business owners. The fish shack, a cooperative take-out restaurant owned by local fisherman, is one of the communities' largest tourism attractions located at the Grosse-Ile North Fishing Harbor. Enjoying a lobster roll outdoors with several windmills on the horizon is not part of the genuine local experience.

It is difficult to reconcile the preservation of this iconic coastal setting with the reality of walking along a historic shoreline beach beneath the shadows of rotating turbine blades. A community beach should invite tranquility and reflection, not confrontation with industrial machinery. Energy can be produced elsewhere; It does not belong in an area where so much is at stake for Island life.

Concrete wind turbines at the gateway to our community does not respect our traditional values and is uncharacteristic of the identity we have long preserved. Whether you enter or exit the community of Grosse-Île by vehicle along the one and only main road linking access to the rest of the islands (*route 199*)—you will be forced to greet the concrete structures every time. I travel this route during my daily commute to work, making its landscape an integral part of my own living experience.

Wind turbine installations risk irreparably altering the historic landscapes and cultural identity that define our community's heritage. The project will transform traditional fishing landscape along Grosse-Ile North Beach where local families have worked and lived for generations. The wind turbine development will not occur in a vacuum; it will profoundly change the landscapes that carry the collective memory and identity in which sustains our community. Our heritage is not limited to historic buildings or archives- it lives in our horizons, our coastal views, and the relationship between residents and the land passed down through generations.

The installation of industrial-scale wind turbines risks permanently altering these defining features, replacing cultural landscapes within our community, with infrastructure whose scale and visibility cannot be reversed. The project will come at a loss for the community of Grosse-Île- a loss of place, belonging, and continuity. It threatens to sever our community's deep cultural ties to the land which serve as a bridge, connecting us with past, present and future generations. Decisions made today will determine whether future generations can experience and learn from the tradition and landscapes that shaped our community.

5. Conclusion

This submission asks the BAPE to carefully assess whether:

- Social acceptability has truly been demonstrated
- Consultation has been meaningful and transparent
- Setback distances and mitigation measures are sufficient
- Cultural and landscape heritage is protected

Development should unite communities, not divide them.

Respectfully,

Michelle Chevarie