



Highlights

Investigation and Public Hearing Report

Report No. 396

Grosse-Île Wind Farm Project in the Communauté maritime des Îles-de-la-Madeleine

June 2026



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Background to the BAPE's Mandate

On January 14, 2026, following 16 requests for a public consultation submitted during the public information period held from November 19 to December 19, 2025, the ministre de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs, Bernard Drainville, mandated the BAPE to hold a public hearing on the project. The BAPE Chair, Alain R. Roy, therefore formed a Commission of Inquiry whose mandate began on February 9, 2026, for a maximum period of four months.

The Project

The Grosse-Île wind farm project consists of building and operating a wind farm made up of four wind turbines, each 150 m tall, with a total installed capacity of 18 MW. The wind farm would be built in the municipality of Grosse-Île, near the Mines Seleine salt mine, in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine archipelago. Located on a dune ridge, the proposed wind farm would be built between Route 199 and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It would be located about six kilometres northeast of the two wind turbines at the Dune-du-Nord wind farm and three kilometres from the centre of Grosse-Île's urban perimeter. The northernmost wind turbine would be built two kilometres from the nearest permanent residence. Construction would run from 2027 to 2028. Under the terms of the power supply contract with Hydro-Québec, the wind farm would operate for 30 years. After that period, the proponent would be required to decommission the wind farm unless the power supply contract is renewed. Electricity deliveries are expected to begin in 2028.

The project proponent is Grosse-Île Wind Power L.P., a company owned in equal shares by Alliance de l'énergie de l'Est and Nutrinor-Gilbert Énergie renouvelable. The Alliance is made up of the Régie intermunicipale de l'énergie du Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Régie intermunicipale de l'énergie Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and the regional county municipalities (RCMs) of Montmagny and L'Islet. It brings together 209 communities from 15 RCMs, the Wolastoqiyik Wamspekek First Nation and the Communauté maritime des Îles-de-la-Madeleine (CMÎM). For this particular project, the Montmagny and L'Islet RCMs are not partners.

In addition to the installation of the wind turbines, the Grosse-Île wind farm project would require the construction of access roads, a collector system and a connection substation. The project site is made up mainly of dunes covered with low vegetation. A work area of up to one hectare is planned for the installation of each wind turbine. The access roads would have a total right-of-way of approximately 13 m. The collector system would be underground and buried along the roads wherever possible.

The cost of carrying out the project is estimated at \$80 million. However, this amount has not been updated since the impact assessment was filed in August 2023. The proponent also confirmed that this amount does not include any potential costs related to foundation adaptation measures associated with erosion and coastal flooding risks, or the costs of the various monitoring and maintenance programs.

Between 20 and 30 jobs would be created during construction. Economic spinoffs from the partnership with the Alliance are also expected. Over the project's 30-year operating period, under the preferred configuration, the Municipality of Grosse-Île would receive payments totalling \$1.8 million, and surface rights totalling \$1.8 million would be paid to the CMÎM, before indexation. In addition, the project would generate \$22.5 million in benefits for the Alliance over its lifetime, including \$7.5 million that would be paid to the Régie intermunicipale de l'énergie Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

Information and Consultation Activities

The public sessions were held in Grosse-Île and Cap-aux-Meules, in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine. During the first part, the Commission of Inquiry held three sessions on February 10, 11 and 12, 2026, to allow the proponent and specialists from various departments and organizations to answer questions from the public and the Commission. The second part gave participants an opportunity to express their views on the project during the two sessions held on March 10 and 11, 2026. The Commission received 48 briefs, 12 of which were summarized during the sessions, along with four verbal opinions. It also received six comments and one annotated image. A hybrid approach was used, allowing the public to participate in the Commission's work either in person in the consultation room or remotely by video conference or telephone. In addition, because Grosse-Île is a municipality with bilingual status, the sessions held on site were simultaneously interpreted.

Participants' Concerns and Opinions

Several participants commented on the justification for the project. Some organizations support the project, citing its contribution to Québec's energy transition and to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the context of climate change. Others question the project's rationale. The life cycle assessment of the wind turbines, the net GHG emissions that would be generated by the project and the choice of wind power as a decarbonization solution were all called into question. Although they are not opposed to renewable energy, several Grosse-Île residents consider the chosen site for the project to be unsuitable.

Many people criticized the information and consultation process carried out by the proponent. Others pointed to the opposition to the project expressed by several signatories of a petition submitted to the Municipality of Grosse-Île. Some participants concluded that the project's social acceptability had not been demonstrated.

Concerns were raised during the public sessions about the project's potential effects on health and quality of life. Members of the public noted the lack of data demonstrating that wind turbines have no health impacts. However, the project's effects on the landscape remain a central quality-of-life concern for participants. They object to the presence of the wind turbines, which they believe would detract from the beauty of the area, a feature closely tied to the community's identity and heritage.

From an economic standpoint, some fear that the project could have a negative effect on the community's tourism industry, while others see it as an opportunity for economic and sustainable development. Those participants view benefits such as job creation and economic spinoffs for the

communities concerned positively, as these could support local projects and improve public infrastructure. Some people believe the wind turbines would provide little benefit to Grosse-Île, while the expected revenues do not reflect the risks borne by the host community.

Participants stated that many fishers in the Grosse-Île community depend on the fishing industry and have concerns about the project's effects on marine wildlife. They maintain that it has yet to be demonstrated that the project poses no risks. Others are concerned about impacts on wildlife, particularly birds, fearing that the project could contribute to mortality among various species present in the area.

Many people struggle to understand how the project could be built in a sensitive dune environment and fear that the damage caused by the wind turbines could be irreversible. Others added that the Îles-de-la-Madeleine are already affected by coastal flooding and erosion, and that the risks of these phenomena worsening appear to be underestimated, particularly in light of the financial capacity of the political authorities concerned. Participants also called for the installation of dune stabilization infrastructure.

The Commission's Main Findings and Opinions

After completing its analysis, the Commission of Inquiry is of the opinion that the project should be authorized, given the electricity supply context in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which relies mainly on the Cap-aux-Meules thermal generating station. The project reflects the desire to reduce the archipelago's dependence on fossil fuels and would provide environmental benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, this recommendation to authorize the project is conditional on obtaining additional information before the government makes its decision, particularly concerning engagement with the host municipality, the consideration of climate hazards, the project's cost and the protection of special-status bird species.

During the public hearing, the Commission noted that the project is facing opposition within the host municipality. Although the Îles-de-la-Madeleine community generally supports the development of the wind power sector in the archipelago, part of Grosse-Île's population questions the project's location. The proponent is now proposing a community engagement plan to improve the project's acceptability. Although the measures presented in this plan are relevant, the Commission stresses that the proponent should increase its communications and establish ongoing dialogue with the Grosse-Île community before the project is authorized and continue these efforts throughout the project. With respect to the project's acceptability, the Municipality of Grosse-Île should promptly consult its population in order to document its position and concerns.

The project's location also raises issues related to the progression of coastal erosion. Although it has been established that, in the short term, the distance between the proposed infrastructure and the shoreline would protect the infrastructure, its level of exposure as the project approaches the end of its contract remains uncertain. For now, the engineering measures proposed to protect the project components, along with the monitoring programs for changes in the dune system and the shoreline, seem sufficient. Should stabilization measures be required, they should be planned in cooperation with

the stakeholders concerned. This approach does not release Grosse-Île Wind Power L.P. from its obligation to bear the costs required to ensure the project's resilience.

The project would generate economic spinoffs at the regional and local levels, including guaranteed payments to the Municipality of Grosse-Île over the project's lifetime, in a stable and predictable manner. However, the annual distributions do not take into account the additional costs associated with implementing engineering measures to protect the wind turbines from coastal hazards, stabilizing the dune system, and carrying out the various monitoring and maintenance programs. Nor have the construction costs for the infrastructure, including the purchase of the turbines, been revised since 2023. It is therefore essential that the proponent reassess the project's costs in order to clarify the benefits for the intermunicipal energy boards involved in the project and, ultimately, for the municipalities of Grosse-Île and Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

With respect to the piping plover, the proponent should verify whether the species is present on the shoreline and on the project site during its nesting period. If so, the proponent should implement the protection measures set out in the environmental monitoring program for the entire lifetime of the project. The construction and operation of the proposed wind farm could jeopardize the recovery of this endangered species, which may nest on the shoreline in the immediate vicinity of the wind turbines.

Lastly, the effectiveness of the atmospheric visibility detectors that would be installed to limit bird mortality from collisions during periods of poor visibility has yet to be demonstrated. Should carcasses of special-status birds be found at the foot of the wind turbines, Grosse-Île Wind Power L.P. should implement additional mitigation measures to avoid undermining recovery efforts for these species.