

## **Environment Minister and ski resort spend time and money on court appeal rather than on gathering important environmental information.**

For Immediate Release

**Pincher Creek, Alberta, May 18, 2005**

In July, 2004, Madam Justice Kenny, of the Court of Queen's Bench, ruled that Alberta Environment's decision not to require Castle Mountain Resort (CMR) to complete an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of its proposed expansion was "clearly irrational", and ordered the Minister to reconsider his decision in accordance with the legislation.

The Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition (CCWC) had initiated the Judicial Review in October of 2002, claiming that the government had not followed its own legislation, and requested the court to order an EIA. The case was heard in December, 2003.

The Minister and CMR appealed Justice Kenny's ruling. The appeal will be heard On Thursday May 19, at 10 a.m. in the Court of Appeal in Calgary, 26th Floor, TCPL Building, 450-1 St. SW.

Jeff Emmett, a CCWC Director says, "We were very disappointed when the former Environment Minister, Minister Taylor, chose to spend time and money on a court appeal rather than doing the right thing by ordering an environmental assessment."

The West Castle Valley, where CMR is located, is just north of Waterton Lakes National Park, and is part of the Crown of the Continent ecosystem. It has the highest level of precipitation along Alberta's Eastern Slopes, and contains a number of nationally and internationally rare plant species. It is both home to, and a key migration route for, many important species including Grizzly Bears.

Castle Mountain Resort has proposed to expand its ski terrain onto an undeveloped mountain, to add a new chair lift, new runs, and cat skiing. Along with the expanded ski terrain, CMR intends to increase its residential development to 225 housing units, and to add a hotel and hostel, pubs, restaurants, RV lots, local roads, and parking lots. CMR is an island of private development within the proposed Castle Wilderness, a thousand square kilometres of wild land containing crucial watersheds and wildlife habitat.

James Tweedie, Conservation Director for the CCWC says, "While we're very confident in the merits of our case we hope, regardless of the outcome of the appeal, that the new Minister of the Environment, Minister Boutillier, will order an EIA so we can get on with the vital job of protecting the natural values of the Castle which are so important to all Albertans".

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