

The Honourable Blair Lekstrom, M.L.A.
Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources
PO Box 9060, STN PROV GOVT
Victoria BC V8W 9E1

Dear Minister Lekstrom:

I am a BC resident who is writing to you, in your capacity as an elected provincial government representative, to formally register my opposition to the *BC Energy Plan*. Please add my name and my remarks to the tens of thousands of letters, emails, faxes, and phone calls that your office has already received detailing the adverse social, environmental, and economic impacts of the province's energy policy.

British Columbians have been deceived by our provincial government. And concerned citizens from across this province have responded by investigating, uncovering, and communicating the truth.

First, the BC Liberal government has fabricated an energy crisis by repeatedly claiming that the province has been a net importer of electricity for most years over the past decade. In fact, data from BC Stats on the province's electricity trade reveals the very opposite: BC has been a net exporter of energy for seven of the past eleven years. The truth is that BC typically imports electricity from out of province at low rates during off-peak times, then sells it at a significant markup to other jurisdictions during high-peak periods.

Electricity trade patterns would be common knowledge in the Energy ministry, yet this information has been knowingly withheld from and misrepresented to the people of British Columbia.

Next, without public consultation or explanation, the BC Liberals introduced energy policy that prohibited its own profitable Crown utility from developing new sources of electricity. Instead, all new power—with the possible exception of Site C, presently in the second year of a protracted five year consultation process—is generated exclusively by private companies.

The government argues vehemently that BC Hydro lacks the expertise and capacity to develop new power projects, conveniently omitting the fact that much of the professional expertise in BC's private power sector comes directly from BC Hydro.

The government's business case in favour of privatizing BC's electricity sector has been that private power producers assume the financial risk for each proposed project. In reality, hydro rate increases are subsidizing private power developments. Last year, BC Hydro applied and implemented a rate increase of 6.56% on April 1st followed by a two-tiered rate structure to residential customers on October 1st. According to information published in the province's 2009 *Crown Corporations Service Plans*, an additional 21% increase in rates is being proposed over the next three years (7.5% in 2010; 6.56% in 2011; 6.75% in 2012).

By the government's own admission, explicitly stated in this year's *Budget and Fiscal Plan*, "increases in energy costs [are due] largely to a greater proportion of energy requirements being met through imported energy and from new sources of supply generated by independent power producers."

The fact is: whatever financial risks private power producers incur will surely be offset by substantial profits once proposals are fast-tracked through an inadequate environmental assessment process and approved for construction.

BC Hydro is already on the hook for almost \$30 billion in long-term Energy Purchase Agreements for private power—with contract terms and conditions guarded in secrecy. In the meantime, our Crown utility, having contributed almost \$10 billion to the provincial coffers since 1994, will be slowly bankrupted.

QUESTION THE CANDIDATES!

Here are a few suggested questions that you can ask at All Candidates meetings.
Phone your local MLA's office for a schedule of meeting dates/times/locations in your area.

Tear off this card &
send above letter

1

The government has repeatedly stated that BC has been a net importer of electricity for most years over the past decade. In fact, data from BC Stats reveals that we have been a net exporter of energy for 7 of the last 11 years. Is your government prepared to reevaluate forecasted domestic energy requirements and the BC Energy Plan's "self-sufficiency" targets?

2

Do you favour repealing Bill 30 and restoring zoning authority rights to municipalities, regional districts, and citizens with respect to private power developments slated for their jurisdictions?

3

Would you support a moratorium on issuing any additional private power project licences or applications in British Columbia? If so, for how long, and to what ends?

... more questions 

The government and the private power industry have promised to solve the province’s alleged energy crisis by generating “green power.” And run-of-river hydro projects have been promoted as the solution.

But privately generated run-of-river power is not “green”—no matter how government public affairs teams and private power industry executives spin their story.

There’s a lot more to green energy than the absence of greenhouse gas emissions. Typically, run-of-river projects require logging, access roads, transmission lines, rock blasting, and river diversion. Without public ownership and oversight, regional planning, and adherence to strict environmental standards, private hydro projects risk major damage to forests, wildlife, and many aquatic species. The environmental footprint could be devastating, especially since the cumulative impacts on hundreds of proposed developments in BC have not been adequately studied.

Moreover, run-of-river projects do not produce firm energy. Rather, power is generated primarily during the spring run-off, when the climate in our province becomes more moderate and BC energy requirements actually decrease. Again, citizens in this province have been misled: these projects aren’t intended for BC “energy self-sufficiency” at all. More likely, BC’s natural resources will be irreparably damaged and exploited to develop run-of-river power for electricity export to the US—particularly California—where energy needs peak in the spring and summer months.

Plain and simple, privatizing BC’s electricity sector is not advantageous for the province or its people. Private companies are driven by profit, and profit is measured in this case by energy *consumption*, not *conservation*. Because Crown corporations measure their profitability through economic, social, and political objectives, a public utility can be profitable through green energy generation, achieving conservation targets, and fair pricing.

As a BC citizen who will be going to the polls on May 12th, I cannot in good conscience support a political party that is willing to exploit our province’s precious natural resources for economic gain. Nor can I support a business plan that will line the pockets of private business by sabotaging our profitable Crown utility. I urge this government to take swift and immediate action to:

- provide accurate information and more realistic forecasting on BC’s domestic energy requirements
- make a transparent and thorough disclosure with respect to its plans for electricity export
- incorporate regional and provincial land use planning to decide which areas are environmentally and geographically appropriate for new energy projects
- restore the rights of BC municipalities to accept or reject power project proposals in their jurisdictions by rescinding Bill 30
- reinvest in our province’s Crown utility by repealing the prohibition against BC Hydro constructing new and necessary energy projects

Please respond to this letter by explaining why the BC Liberal government misled its constituents and how it intends to reverse the adverse social, environmental, and economic impacts of its current energy policy.

Sincerely,

cc: The Honourable Gordon Campbell, MLA, Premier British Columbia, PO Box 9041, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC V8W 9E1
The Honourable Barry Penner, MLA, Minister of Environment, PO Box 9047, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC V8W 9E2

_____, MLA, Constituency Address: _____

Authorized by BC Citizens for Public Power, registered under the Election Act, 604.681.5939



MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK AT ALL CANDIDATES MEETINGS.



4

In 2003, BC Hydro outsourced one-third of its operation—administrative and customer services—to Accenture, claiming costs savings of \$250 million over the 10 year contract. With growing evidence of duplication of services and inefficiencies, will your government support an Auditor General’s review to investigate BC Hydro’s true costs and savings from its outsourcing agreement with Accenture?

5

The BC Energy Plan presently restricts BC Hydro with respect to developing any new sources of energy for the province; new energy development is relegated to the private sector. Do you support lifting the existing restrictions that prevent BC Hydro from developing new generation projects?

6

Would you support an Auditor General’s review of Energy Purchase Agreements between BC Hydro and private power companies to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding contract terms and conditions and assess the benefits to the province?

... more questions