



PEACE VALLEY

landowner association

Ss#2, Site 12, Comp. 19, Fort St. John, British Columbia, V1J 4M7

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JULY 2, 2015 STATEMENT OF KEN BOON, PRESIDENT OF PEACE VALLEY LANDOWNER ASSOCIATION

Based on the firm belief that British Columbians have a right to careful, deliberate and transparent environmental and economic assessment of massive projects, the Peace Valley Landowner Association sought court review of the BC government's decision to grant an Environmental Assessment Certificate for Site C dam. The Site C dam commits our public funds to the most expensive infrastructure undertaking in our history and floods the last remaining pristine parts of the Peace River Valley.

However, today the BC Supreme Court upheld a government process that renders environmental assessment to be little more than a 'rubber stamp.'

The only independent body that reviewed the proposed Site C Project, the federal/provincial Joint Review Panel, found that BC Hydro had not established the need for the Site C project on the timeline proposed, and that by the time that new power is needed, alternative energy sources may well be better options for British Columbia, both financially and environmentally. The Joint Review Panel also found that BC Hydro had not established the cost of Site C. Finally, it found that Site C would cause significant adverse environmental effects. In light of these findings, the Joint Review Panel recommended that the BC Utilities Commission—an independent body established in this province to vet energy decisions like Site C—should review the Site C dam mega project to address these critical issues.

Under normal circumstances a project like Site C would require independent oversight by not only the Joint Review Panel, but also the BC Utilities Commission and the Agricultural Land Commission. However, the BC government, the proponent of Site C, removed two of these three regulatory processes for the Site C project, and ignored the recommendations of the remaining independent body, the Joint Review Panel.

The BC Supreme Court decision is not an endorsement of the Site C dam.

The Court decision is on a narrow procedural point raised to require a more thorough examination of the mega project. It does not address the serious concerns of many British Columbians that the BC government is determined to build a giant make-work project that we do not need, and cannot responsibly afford—and that government is doing so by shutting down the normal checks and balances that ensure pragmatic decision-making in the public interest.

PVLA is reviewing today's Court decision, and will continue to seek fair and transparent oversight of the BC government determination to build Site C. This is the first of 6 court challenges to the Site C dam approvals. PVLA continues to stand in support of the First Nations who are fighting so hard to save their treaty rights and their way of life from the flood Site C will bring. PVLA and Treaty 8 First Nations will be in Federal Court beginning on July 20 for the challenges to the federal environmental assessment approvals.

All British Columbia ratepayers and taxpayers should be deeply concerned that we could end up paying for a costly energy dinosaur. And the costs, both in terms of public funds and the environment, are too serious to be rubber stamped.

PVLA concerns include:

- Site C dam will flood the last pristine stretch of the Peace Valley destroying farmland that could produce fruit and vegetables for 1 million people in a time when drought affects where much of our fruit and vegetables are produced. Former chair of the Agricultural Land Commission, Richard Bullock described this removal of farmland as a “sin against humanity.”
- 100 % risk of destruction of very significant fishing, hunting and wilderness areas which are the subject of First Nations treaties.
- Energy alternatives like wind, solar and geothermal energy were not properly examined. Harry Swain, the Chair of the Joint Review Panel, has said that the government's failure to investigate alternatives to Site C dam amounts to "dereliction of duty".

Respected international economist Robert McCullough has noted that the business case assumptions for Site C are 2 to 5 years out of date in an world where energy technology like wind, solar and geothermal is rapidly coming down in price. Will other renewable options be half the cost of Site C? We don't know, because the government refuses to refer Site C to the independent, open and expert BC utilities Commission for further review with full procedural safeguards like cross examination on the evidence.

- Site C dam also risks substantial rate hikes for electricity – already increasing by 28%. By BC Hydro's own numbers, the dam will lose \$ 200 million in its first 2 years of operation. Will the declining costs of solar panels, wind power and other new technologies lead to even greater losses?
- Site C will add significantly to our provincial debt. The mega project is currently pegged at \$ 9 billion, but as Robert McCullough has noted, every other North American dam project has gone over budget. What will this do to our borrowing room for other much needed public infrastructure projects around the province? And will it affect the provincial credit-rating raising the cost for all our borrowing?