

## Site C a train wreck in slow motion

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Ken Boon (left) attends a Site C open house in Fort St. John on July 9, 2015, at the Pomeroy Hotel.

Photo By WILLIAM STODALKA

It has been a month now since the BC government announced that Site C would continue. The accounting rationale used by Premier Horgan makes absolutely no sense in light of the findings from the recent BCUC review, and the much greater financial woes of continuing the project.

The Site C dam went through the environmental assessment process as a \$7.9-billion proposed project, and was bumped up to \$8.8 billion when the Christy Clark Liberal government decided to approve it just three years ago. Energy Minister Bill Bennett assured us that price was rock solid, but he was wrong. It took the BCUC review to drag the truth out of a reluctant BC Hydro that the project was indeed over budget and behind schedule already, and Premier Horgan decided to keep this going as a now \$10.7-billion project on December 11.

Why does anyone accept this as a good idea, or why is this even acceptable? Even if one ignores the enormous negative impacts and lost opportunity of flooding a diverse river valley for one sole purpose, as Premier Horgan apparently has done, the economics absolutely make no sense.

At just over two years into construction, this project has chewed up \$2 billion while the price tag has gone up, you guessed it, \$2 billion. This is like slowly walking up the down escalator while throwing money in the air. At this rate, Site C can't even get to the "point of no return."

In the unlikely scenario that there are no further cost overruns, it will now cost us as much to finish Site C as we were told the entire project would cost just two years ago. So, all the money spent so far has literally been thrown away by running over budget. With that in mind, and combined with the final report from the BCUC, the only logical decision was to terminate Site C. However, a very unhappy looking Premier Horgan and two ministers made the opposite announcement.

It's noteworthy that just two days later, Alberta announced a new Canadian record low purchase price of just 3.7 cents per KW for 600 MW of wind energy. By comparison, that's about 2.5 times cheaper than the break-even price for Site C power.

Alberta had only planned on purchasing 400 MW, but they decided to lock in for 50% more power at those low prices. By the way, it will only cost \$1 billion to build that 600 MW of wind energy, while Site C at \$10.7 billion is 1100 MW. These are the sort of numbers energy economist Robert McCullough spoke about in the BCUC review, and that BC Hydro tried to discredit.

So, while there were smiles all around at that Alberta press conference, I can understand why Horgan and his ministers looked so sad; I just cannot understand the decision.

For many of us who took part in the BCUC review process, that decision is shocking and unacceptable. Premier Horgan has been invited to appear at the Site C Summit in Victoria on January 26 to explain.

Allowed to continue, the remaining years of construction will be a train wreck in slow motion with ongoing geotechnical problems, expropriations, trampling of Treaty rights, and destruction of the river valley in full view.

Will Site C now be completed? I would say the jury is still out on that. Thank God this valley does seem to have nine lives, and we pray that the valley and those who care for it will persevere in the end.

— **Ken Boon, Bear Flat**

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