

# Vaughn Palmer: Public unfairly kept in dark on Site C's 'gory' details

The B.C. Utilities Commission moved quickly Wednesday to block public access to the uncensored version of an independent review it commissioned into Site C.



*VAUGHN PALMER*

Published on: September 27, 2017 | Last Updated: September 27, 2017 7:07 PM PDT



Roller-compacted concrete conveyor construction at the south bank of B.C. Hydro's Site C dam project near Fort St. John. *B.C. HYDRO*

VICTORIA — The B.C. Utilities Commission moved quickly Wednesday to block public access to the uncensored version of an independent review it commissioned into Site C.

At 8 a.m., the communications director for the commission, Erica Hamilton, called Robert McCullough, the Portland, Ore.-based energy expert who'd posted an unredacted copy of the report by Deloitte LLP on his website.

She asked him to take down the offending version of the report and he obliged.

With that, the public was again denied access to the full details of Deloitte's findings about Site C, including delays and overruns on the main construction contract for excavating the site, diverting the river and building the dam itself.

The main civil works contract was \$136 million over budget and two months behind schedule from the outset. Already it has eaten three-quarters of its share of the contingency budget, with only one-quarter of the work done. All noted here Wednesday in a column based on the unredacted version of the Deloitte report.

## RELATED

**Vaughn Palmer: B.C. Hydro's Site C promises ring hollow**

(<http://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/columnists/vaughn-palmer-b-c-hydros-site-c-promises-ring-hollow>)

---

**Vaughn Palmer: Stone sets tone trying to stand out in Liberal leadership crowd**

(<http://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/columnists/vaughn-palmer-stone-sets-tone-trying-to-stand-out-in-liberal-leadership-crowd>)

---

**Vaughn Palmer: 'Class clown' questions circus over taxpayer subsidies**

(<http://vancouver.sun.com/opinion/columnists/vaughn-palmer-class-clown-questions-circus-over-taxpayer-subsidies>)

---

As it happened, I heard from the BCUC myself back when the Deloitte report was first posted Sept. 8 on the commission website.

I'd summarized a dozen or so highlights from the report on Twitter, when I got an urgent call from Hamilton, the same BCUC official who contacted McCullough this week.

She advised that the commission had taken down the report because it had mistakenly been posted without fully blacking out material that should have been kept confidential. She also asked that I destroy my copy of the unredacted version.

I had not actually downloaded a copy, for which I am still kicking myself. By the time the report was reposted that evening, the most telling passages about the civil works contract were obscured.

Then this week I discovered McCullough had somehow obtained a copy of the version that was briefly available earlier this month.

I don't fault him for taking it down at the request of the commission. He's been appearing before the Site C review as a consultant to the anti-Site C Peace Valley Landowners Association. He'd not be serving the interests of his clients by defying a request from the BCUC. They may apply for some of the public funding that is available to participants in commission proceedings.

But upon hearing that BCUC was again trying to suppress parts of the Deloitte report, I called Hamilton to ask why the commission was withholding critical information from the public.

She replied that it was a decision by the four commissioners on the Site C review panel. Yes, but why?

"We don't feel it is appropriate for it to be publicly available."

Later, I received a followup statement from the commission:

"Access to the confidential version of the report is a matter between a requesting party and B.C. Hydro. Thus, the BCUC considers posting of the confidential report to be inappropriate, and as such requested Mr. McCullough promptly remove the report from his website."

So as I get that, if you want to know the details of a report that is critical of Hydro, you have to apply to Hydro for permission to read it. I leave you to guess how likely permission would be granted and under what conditions.

I also learned that the confidentiality issue was addressed on a statement on Page 1 of the Deloitte report itself.

Quote: "The information in this document contains commercially sensitive information and is confidential and proprietary to Deloitte. No information from this document can be released in whole or in part without the expressed written consent of an authorized officer of Deloitte LLP."

So no spreading it around without the permission of the consulting firm that prepared it.

But at this point the narrative enters the realm of catch-22 or, perhaps, a scenario worked up by Franz Kafka.

For the only reason I know about the statement quoted above is because I read it in the uncensored version, the one posted on McCullough's website until the commission stepped in Wednesday morning. In the approved-by-the commission version, the passage was blacked out.

Yes.

The only way one would know about the confidentiality restrictions on the report would be if one were reading the unrestricted version that one was not supposed to see in the first place.

You can't make this stuff up, but fortunately there is no need to do so.

The day before releasing the Deloitte report, the commission underscored that the text posted on the website would include "redactions to all information provided confidentially from B.C. Hydro."

Then the reminder that if one wanted to see the unredacted version, one would have to seek permission from Hydro. Appropriate, in the eyes of the commission, "because the confidential information pertains to B.C. Hydro."

The information pertains to Hydro yes, but it pertains to the public interest even more.

The censored parts of the Deloitte report detail how Hydro underestimated the cost of the main civil works contract from the outset and only kept the work on schedule by draining the contingency fund.

The findings, as Deloitte itself notes, call into doubt "Hydro's ability to estimate large contracts" and "reduces our confidence in the accuracy of

the other main contract packages that have yet to be awarded.”

No question why Hydro wanted the gory details suppressed. No way should the independent regulator cooperate in keeping the public in the dark.

[Vpalmer@postmedia.com](mailto:Vpalmer@postmedia.com) (<mailto:Vpalmer@postmedia.com>)

[Twitter.com/VaughnPalmer](http://www.twitter.com/VaughnPalmer) (<http://www.twitter.com/VaughnPalmer>)

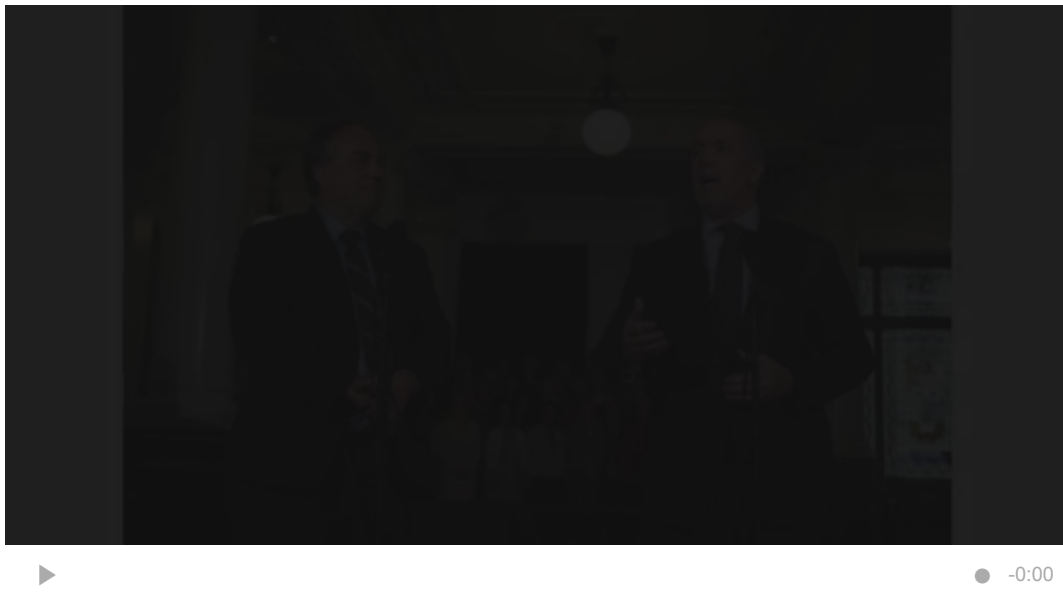
[CLICK HERE](mailto:vanweb@postmedia.com) (<mailto:vanweb@postmedia.com>) *to report a typo.*

*Is there more to this story? We'd like to hear from you about this or any other stories you think we should know about. Email [vantips@postmedia.com](mailto:vantips@postmedia.com) (<mailto:vantips@postmedia.com>)*

BC HYDRO ([HTTP://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/TAG/BC-HYDRO](http://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/TAG/BC-HYDRO))

SITE C ([HTTP://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/TAG/SITE-C](http://VANCOUVERSUN.COM/TAG/SITE-C))

## TRENDING STORIES



Ω

### B.C. NDP partisan hi 'sickening': Greens

Weaver lashes out: 'Offensive.' 'Hypocritical.' 'Saddening.' 'Crap...

[Read More](#)



[◀ Previous](#)

## Vancouver Flyers



## Comments

We encourage all readers to share their views on our articles and blog posts. We are committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion, so we ask you to avoid personal attacks, and please keep your comments relevant and respectful. If you encounter a comment that is abusive, click the "X" in the upper right corner of the comment box to report spam or abuse. We are using Facebook commenting. Visit our FAQ page (<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/news/story.html?id=7195492>) for more information.

6 Comments

Sort by **Newest**



Add a comment...



**Mavis L. Wanczyk**

How to win lottery, Lottery spell that work fast, Spell for lottery, Spell for lottery numbers, Lottery lucky spell.

I contacted him also and told him I want to win a lottery, he cast a spell and gave me lucky winning number which I use and I played and won \$758,700,000 (Seven Hundred Forty-Eight Million, Seven Hundred Thousand!!) This man is a very strong voodoo doc who gives out the numbers that can never fail. Your Lotto spell made wonders, I can't believe it. Thank you so much sir for dedicating your time to cast the Lotto spell for me. "I am eternally grateful for the lotto spell Dr. Trust did for me. Incase you also need him to help you win, you can contact him through his email:

Email him: [Ultimatespellcast@yahoo.com](mailto:Ultimatespellcast@yahoo.com) or [Ultimatespellcast@gmail.com](mailto:Ultimatespellcast@gmail.com)

Like · Reply · 4 hrs



**John Burke**

CRIMINALS !! If everything was on the level, they should be proud to release the details. The low-life running Hydro are spending money, and endebting users through a monopoly position. Like the BILLION spent on useless "smart meters" these criminals should be named, prosecuted and sent to jail for lack of fuduciary care. What a bunch of disgusting deadbeats ..... including their Liberal masters financed by criminal corporations. No wonder Christian Lepp, former premier is hiding under



masters financed by criminal corporations. No wonder Christina Joan, former premier, is hiding under a rock somewhere with the other rats.

Like · Reply · 1 · 8 hrs



**Glenn MacKenzie**

Poll finds support for Trans Mountain pipeline in B.C.

Angus Reid Institute finds significant number of NDP and Green voters in favour of finishing the already-approved Trans Mountain pipeline and Site C.

Like · Reply · 8 hrs



**Gary Chalmers**

Wrong article moron.

Like · Reply · 1 hr



**Philip Gardner**

SITE C...?

SHUT THIS SUCKER DOWN !

Like · Reply · 1 · 9 hrs



**Philip Gardner**

One thing is clear....

BC Hydro became a bloated and grossly inefficient tax guzzling Crown Corp. under the BC LIEberals.

The LIEberals are gone probably for at least 2 terms of government due to their incompetence, scandals and corruption.

It's now time to reign in this TAX \$\$\$\$ guzzling nightmare that BC Hydro has become..  
JUST like ICBC has to be brought under control too.

A POX ON the LIEberals and these out of control BC Crown Corps.

Like · Reply · 1 · 9 hrs



**Glenn MacKenzie**

The biggest problem in BC is the NDP's raising taxes; cutting revenues from bridge tolls; cancelling all major projects and having no plan to attract or retain investment and jobs. We will need the electricity from Site C according to the experts like Prof. Mark Jaccard at SFU, so let's finish it. Major infrastructure projects like this have cost overruns, but it's still necessary, with no viable alternative.

The Liberals helped make us the strongest economy in Canada and the NDP--socialists are working hard to make us a have-not province again. let's reject this negativity and seek continued prosperity.

Like · Reply · 8 hrs



**John Burke**

YES -- add ICBC to the mess !! Contempible disrespect for beleaguered taxpayers !

Like · Reply · 1 · 8 hrs

([HTTP://WWW.POSTMEDIA.COM](http://www.postmedia.com))

© 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.

Powered by WordPress.com VIP ([https://vip.wordpress.com/?](https://vip.wordpress.com/?utm_source=vip_powered_wpcom&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=VIP%20Footer%20Credit&utm_term=vancouver.sun.com)

[utm\\_source=vip\\_powered\\_wpcom&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=VIP%20Footer%20Credit&utm\\_term=vancouver.sun.com](https://vip.wordpress.com/?utm_source=vip_powered_wpcom&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=VIP%20Footer%20Credit&utm_term=vancouver.sun.com))