



## Guest column: Clean-energy producers are good for B.C

By Paul Kariya, for The Province September 20, 2011

B.C.'s clean-energy sector is an economic advantage for our province. The sector creates good, family-supporting jobs in rural and First Nations communities and generates needed revenue for all levels of government.

With the global economy still on shaky footing, you would think this made-in-B.C. success story would be welcome news. Yet in the wake of last month's *Review of B.C. Hydro*, critics have used the report for their own ends to stridently oppose clean energy from renewable resources like wind, run of river, biomass and solar.

As in the past, these critics are short on facts and long on misinformation about the positive impact and true cost effectiveness of electricity generated by B.C.'s clean-energy producers and its small impact on B.C. Hydro's proposed rate increase. They also make unsubstantiated claims about the industry's environmental record.

British Columbians deserve better than the critics' shrill rhetoric. Here are the facts.

To date, B.C.'s clean-energy sector has created 18,000 person-years of employment. Many of these jobs are in First Nations and rural communities.

And the sector has contributed more than \$2 billion to our province's economy, while contributing over \$378 million to government for public services — money that pays for our hospitals and schools.

Together, when the 27 projects in B.C. Hydro's most recent power call are built, they will deliver another 3,800 person-years of construction employment and an additional \$3.8 billion in capital investments across B.C., including tens of millions of dollars in community spending that supports local small businesses.

Also, not to be overlooked, is that 125 First Nations participate in B.C.'s clean-energy sector through direct ownership, equity investments and various partnership arrangements.

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Clean energy has opened the door to greater opportunities and a better economic future for First Nations. Their involvement in the sector means new jobs and economic benefits they would otherwise not have.

Contrary to what the critics allege, B.C.'s clean-energy producers provide good, fair and long-term value for money for B.C. ratepayers. Our electricity costs less, if not the same, as electricity generated by B.C. Hydro.

Try as the critics might, they can't change the fact that a new supply of electricity will cost more than an old supply of electricity, whether it is generated by B.C. Hydro or a clean-energy producer.

To assert otherwise is simply wrong. Comparing the price of electricity from a new clean-energy project with the price of electricity from one of B.C. Hydro's older dams is like comparing house prices today with house prices from the 1960s.

Along these same lines, the critics were incorrect to cite the *Review of B.C. Hydro* as evidence that clean-energy producers were somehow responsible for B.C. Hydro's rate increase.

B.C. Hydro's own submission to the B.C. Utilities Commission shows that the utility's purchases of clean energy from our members accounted for only 2.6 per cent of B.C. Hydro's proposed rate increase of 32 per cent over three years.

The critics also need to check their facts regarding the minimal environment footprint of clean-energy production.

Clean-energy projects undergo rigorous environmental reviews under provincial and federal environmental legislation.

For example, when a proponent seeks to develop a new project, they must first apply for a Crown land licence or a water licence, which grants them the right to construct their project on Crown land or use the water according to the terms and conditions specified in the licence.

The project application is made available for review and feedback from government agencies, local governments, First Nations and the public. Permitting agencies use this feedback when considering whether to approve applications and in setting conditions for approvals.

All told, a typical project requires more than 50 licences, permits and approvals before it gets built.



We have a choice in B.C. We can listen to the critics and fear-mongers who oppose the development of wind, run of river, biomass and other clean and renewable energies on ideological grounds.

Or we can continue to responsibly develop clean energy, grow our economy and create made-in-B.C. jobs for the benefit of our communities, First Nations and families.

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