

Submission to the BCUC Site C Review

Cost of Remediation

by Ken Boon

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Site C Inquiry Panel

David Morton, Chair, and Commissioners Karen Keilty, Dennis Cote and Richard Mason

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Dear Members of the Commission Panel:

I am a resident of the Peace River valley directly impacted by the Site C project. This submission is in regards to the scope and cost of remediation should Site C be terminated. In regards to the Terms of Reference, it will speak to the “*cost to ratepayers of terminating the project*”.

There is a rumour that BC Hydro is using a number of \$500 million for rehabilitation or remediation should Site C be terminated. While no one will know the exact number at this time, and it will depend on the scope of work required to be done, I believe that price tag to be excessive.

First, it should not be expected for all areas impacted by work already done to be “rehabilitated” to original condition. I think most people will agree that emphasize should be on remediation with the understanding that nature will do much of that work for us.

Issue; Remediation of mulched and logged areas:

From our farm at Bear Flat, I was witness to the mulching of merchantable timber by BCH around our home last winter, with some of that occurring on our expropriated land, or on land that we had leased from BCH. My believe was that when this project was killed, most of those areas would require the layer of mulch to be mechanically removed in order for vegetation to grow again within my lifetime. In fact, when I ask the workers why they were doing all of that costly mulching instead of logging and sending the wood to a mill for a financial gain for BCH, the reply from some was that mulching served their purpose better because it would stop regrowth before the reservoir started filling.

Well, they were wrong, and so was I. Poplars, cottonwood trees, shrubs, grasses and other vegetation are growing back in all but the areas with the thickest layer of mulch.

My observation now is that only the areas with the thickest mulch will need to be remediated, and much of the replanting of trees is happening naturally.

My observation from areas where there was logging is that regrowth of new trees is also happening very well there too.

Finally, it should be noted that only a relatively small portion of the area needed for the reservoir has been logged or mulched.

Solution; Mother Nature is already doing much of this, and let's just jump in and help where needed.

Issue; Dam site remediation:

Reclaiming the dam site to original condition makes no sense. First, it would be too expensive, and second, there has been beneficial resources developed there that can serve other purposes.

Obviously, the vast gravel resources developed there are a benefit.

Some new river bottom farmland can be developed where now cleared and feasible.

Roads and bridges have been built that may serve other purposes.

Power, sewer and water services were established at the campsite. While it likely is not feasible to repurpose that specific Taj Mahal of a rental camp, the services established there might very well be repurposed.

Of course the dam site is a secretive restricted area to the general public, and especially to me. However, there is likely other infrastructure and resources developed and established there that can be repurposed.

In regards to remediation of ground disturbance at the dam site, emphasize should be on stabilization where needed. It is ironic that even while trying to build the dam, BCH is struggling with stabilizing the slopes. Viewed in that light, perhaps stopping now will just avoid further slope stabilizing problems and save money. Who knows?

That giant hole they are digging in order to find something solid to anchor the dam can just stay there. Maybe flood it or make it part of a wetland development. Or how about bungee jumping?

Finally, in regards to the dam site viewpoint now just opened almost a year 'behind schedule'. Keep it as a tourist attraction to the greatest boondoggle in BC history that thankfully was stopped in time. Our society needs physical reminders to avoid making the same mistakes over and over again. None of us will live long enough to learn from our own mistakes.

Solution: Repurpose where possible and remediate/stabilize the rest.

Issue; Decommissioning? Dams can get very expensive at end of life:

We should not view the cost of remediation as a burden, and therefore a further argument against terminating the project. In fact, doing it now at this stage should be viewed as getting off easy. What would the cost to future generations be for decommissioning of Site C, in addition to the two dams upstream? In the JRP Hearings for Site C, BCH simply refused to acknowledge decommissioning, or the cost of such, for Site C. Period. Meanwhile, it is being built downstream from the storage dam that is arguably at half-life. In fact, the WAC Bennett dam has already had its own problems. Just check out this award winning article on the 1996 sinkhole.

http://www.openschool.bc.ca/courses/earth/60-Storey_Crisis.pdf

Now BCH is in the midst of a very expensive rip rap project to keep the face of the dam from eroding away (you know, that *cheap* hydroelectric power). The removal of old dams in the US has become common with approximately 1000 now done. Our time will come. To simply ignore this problem while knowing that future generations will be burdened with it is irresponsible to say the least. If nothing else, the cost of either decommissioning, or whatever else is envisioned it will take to stabilize the dam need to

be considered in this financial review. The alternatives to Site C do not come with that baggage.

Solution: Nip it in the bud and do it now!

Some further suggestions for remediation:

In the event that BCH or other parties bring forth a dollar figure for remediation/reclamation, I recommend that your panel ask for details on how that figure is derived. Maybe add some salt too.

I also recommend that upon the cancelation of the Site C dam, the BC government will strike an advisory panel of experts who can help set the direction of remediation. At some point, involvement of locals should be involved in issues near their home, farms or whatever may be the case. I know that on our former land, I would expect to be involved in that process. Of course, there will need to be various experts involved such as soil, forestry and vegetation experts.

Do not allow BCH to farm out remediation to one of the big conglomerates like Samsung or such. They just skim off money and then subcontract it out. Have BCH give it to the contractors, farmers or whoever is actually going to do it.

Conclusion:

We can be thankful the destruction from Site C is still very limited. It could have been much worse by now. In fact, left to their own devices, the world renowned Watson Slough at Bear Flat would have been totally cleared last winter if not for being stopped (legally and peacefully) by a combination of concerned citizens, a World Wetland Day event, and the Peace River Regional District basically shaming BCH into backing down. Most of the valley is still a beautiful place, and with a bit of help from us, nature will reclaim it.

I view remediation as an opportunity, not a burden. It can be done in a sensible way that will not break the bank account to do our part.

Sincerely,
Ken Boon

