

August 30, 2017

Submission to the BCUC Regarding the Termination of Site C

From: Mae Burrows, [REDACTED]

Dear Commissioners Morton, Keilty, Cote and Mason,

I am writing to address the questions before the BC Utilities Commission as a citizen who has spent much of my professional life as a practitioner of consensus-building, an educator and an advocate for labour rights, social justice and environmental sustainability.

First, I want to make a preliminary point. I was a member of the Anglican Church who knew that Indigenous women and men were being held in residential schools against their, and their families', wishes. I am committed to righting some of those wrongs. Therefore, I believe that reconciliation cannot take place if we do not terminate Site C. The recent [United Nations report from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) and the [mandate letter](#) to the BC Government's Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation both confirm that we cannot build Site C and also promote reconciliation.

Now to address your immediate questions:

1. Is the project on time and within budget? Clearly not!

According to BC Hydro's [recent quarterly report](#), construction is behind schedule on 75 percent of the milestones identified for Spring 2017. Significant delays have occurred because of the 400 metre-long [tension crack](#) on the north bank of the project.

An emergency situation required the contractor to [hire a temporary foreign worker](#) who specializes in roller-compacted concrete. This position was needed to buttress the dam's foundation. However, its efficacy is questionable given the soil conditions of the area.

Both the tension crack and concrete compaction issues have caused undue delays. They raise the question about the competency of contractor Petrowest and indeed whether the project is 'on-time". On the heels of these delays and need for repairs, Petrowest became insolvent and was terminated from the private consortium building the project. As one of its key corporate members, Petrowest had committed to pay \$15 million as its share of working capital but fell short of that commitment by \$12.5 million. This [instability](#) will have an impact on budgets and on the timing of the project's completion.

Finally, it is important to listen to the voice of people working on the site. I refer you to "Indeed.ca," a website matching employees and employers. The site includes a feedback section where [workers can leave comments](#) evaluating the work-site. On the

whole, the comments regarding management at Site C are negative and reflect a poisoned, unsafe work environment with little training or direction and non-existent or conflicting management. Some direct quotes:

“behind schedule and over budget”, “by far the worst project in Canada”, “always in a state of frenzy, there is no time for training or even taking time to do work properly”, “we barely have a safety team and our safety stats are appalling”.

Any project with these types of reported safety hazards and poor OH&S culture is not an “on budget, on time” project. There will be many unreported hidden costs in terms of worker health and safety.

As a long-time educator, I would have to give this project a “D” for these reasons:

- Assignments not completed on schedule
- Production errors occurring that should have been anticipated and prevented
- Outside resources brought in for an emergency
- Major team member withdraws due to failure to meet promises
- Poor team dynamics - members not working well together and wanting to leave the project rather than engage further

2. What is the cost to ratepayers of suspending the project?

The \$2.75 billion spent on the project to date has not been entirely ‘wasted,’ since much of it went for needed local road and power-line improvements. Hydro’s monthly employment reports contain contractors’ self-reported numbers that are not verified by third parties. They include construction and non-construction contractors who worked not only on the dam and its immediate environs, but also on public roads in the vicinity. So you must see this now as a community benefit. Local contractors were also able to finance the purchase of equipment and other assets which gave a direct boost to the local economy.

You need to assess both benefits (local improvements and asset accumulation) as well as costs when you consider terminating of the project.

3. What is the cost to ratepayers of not terminating the project?

Provincial governments always try to maintain a Triple-A credit rating so they have stable and sufficient borrowing power for capital projects. BC Hydro, with its questionable practice of deferral accounting, may have a negative impact on the province’s credit rating.

BC does have a good credit rating now. This is an undeniable benefit to the people of British Columbia. We have many public infrastructure projects which need to be built to improve the health and safety of our residents. If we borrow \$9 billion (a conservative

estimate) for Site C, that will impact our ability to borrow for other projects such as day-care centres, affordable housing, hospitals and schools. Obviously our borrowing capacity is not unlimited. We must stop borrowing for Site C now and start funding fair-wage construction jobs throughout the province to build public infrastructure facilities that we need.