Barriere Star Journal - Letters

Citizens for Green Energy advise "become informed about BC Hydro"

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Published: **February 14, 2011 1:00 AM**

To the editor;

Re: 'Reader has a different perspective re: BC Hydro' (North Thompson Star/Journal: January 31, 2011).

Shirley Naso's letter of January 31st presents a very distorted picture of B.C.'s energy sector and it is filled with highly inaccurate information about BC Hydro and independent green energy producers.

Contrary to Ms. Naso's claim, the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) has never ruled that green energy, or the independent producers who supply it, are "unnecessary and not in the public interest." Her claim is completely false.

In fact, the BCUC said the exact opposite and fully endorsed the role of independent green energy producers in helping to meet B.C.'s growing electricity needs.

Ms. Naso doesn't need to look any further than page 124 of the 2009 BCUC decision she references in her letter to see that this is so. The BCUC decision states explicitly that the 68 green energy proposals BC Hydro received from independent producers under the recent Clean Power Call are resources that BC Hydro "can and should manage" in order to meet the province's goals for electricity self-sufficiency in a cost-effective manner.

What the BCUC rejected in their 2009 decision was BC Hydro's LTAP (Long Term Acquisition Plan). And it was rejected largely because BC Hydro did not prove to the commission that the utility's planned energy conservation measures would be more cost-effective than purchasing new supplies of electricity from independent producers.

Likewise, the claim made by Ms. Naso that BC Hydro is purchasing electricity at "twice the cost that it can be produced by Hydro itself" is inaccurate and completely misinformed. Ms. Naso has fallen victim to a misleading, and highly disingenuous, apples to oranges comparison between the cost of electricity from BC Hydro facilities built and paid for decades ago to the cost of electricity from newly built facilities.

If Ms. Naso is interested in an honest cost comparison she should compare the cost of electricity from newly built green energy projects to the estimated cost of electricity from the proposed Site C project or to any of BC Hydro's recently overhauled generating facilities such as the Aberfeldie Dam. She will find that all newly built and/or renovated facilities have comparable production costs regardless of who builds them.

Lastly, Ms. Naso references a deeply flawed analysis of BC Hydro's fiscal affairs by a retired Transport Canada aviation economist named Erik Andersen. With no apparent knowledge or expertise in the energy sector, and without knowing some very basic facts, Mr. Anderson selected a few BC Hydro "vectors" in isolation from the whole and concluded, as Chicken Little once did, that the sky is falling at BC Hydro.

If Mr. Anderson had merely opened up a newspaper or tuned in to the nightly news he would have known that BC Hydro is currently investing billions of overdue dollars to rebuild and revitalize the province's aging hydroelectric mega dam infrastructure built in the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. That's what Mr. Anderson's "vectors" are really saying.

BC Hydro's re-investment in its core hydroelectric assets is essential if we expect these assets to continue producing the kind of clean, reliable electricity B.C. is known for and for us to then be able to hand these assets to future generations in good working order.

Happily, we can agree with Ms. Naso on one point; namely, that readers need to become informed. There is a enormous amount of inaccurate information about green energy that has been circulated in this province, and Ms. Naso is not the first person to have fallen victim to it.

We therefore invite readers of the North Thompson Star/Journal to dig deeper, ask questions and consider some of the information we have gathered on our website at www.greenenergybc.ca and on our BCCGE Livewire blog as a start.

David Field, Co-spokesperson

B.C. Citizens for Green Energy