

FEEDBACK

Consider renewable Our government spending is too much

Editor:

Trying to comprehend the massive environmental devastation caused in a few brief moments by the recent Pemberton landslide is a mind boggling exercise to say the least.

Mother Nature awed us all with her display of destructive power, sending 40 million cubic metres of rock, sand, trees and debris crashing down Mount Meager, tearing away roads and bridges and blocking Meager Creek and the Lillooet River. Approximately 1,500 people were forced to flee their homes and another 2,500 were put on evacuation alert. It's absolutely amazing that no one was killed or seriously injured by this natural disaster.

For those who have followed the ongoing discussion about renewable clean energy in BC, the Pemberton slide provides an interesting point of comparison to the frequent, but completely misinformed, claim that renewable energy projects cause environmental devastation.

Unlike Mother Nature, renewable energy projects are subject to strict environmental regulations with more than 50 approvals, permits, licenses and reviews needed from 14 government regulatory bodies before they can proceed.

We certainly can't control Mother Nature or the devastation she chooses to unleash. But we can control what we do and the careful, responsible approach we've adopted in order to secure the clean energy we need here in BC to ensure that any impacts renewable energy projects might have on the environment are minimal and fully mitigated.

Mother Nature may not have to play by the rules, but renewable energy producers do. And despite the awesome environmental devastation that Mother Nature can cause, the care and scrutiny that goes into the development of renewable energy projects in this province is well worth the time and effort.

David Field

Co-spokesperson, BC Citizens for Green Energy

Editor:

Recently, I came across a report about the largest infrastructure project presently undertaken in Europe, which I thought might be of interest, especially in our province of British Columbia.

The city of Stuttgart opened its first railway station in 1850 and its present one in 1922. At the time it was laid out as a "dead end" railway station. This means that trains arriving at the station had to be pulled out from a locomotive waiting to be connected to the train from the back end to continue their journey. This took about an extra five minutes of time. Since Stuttgart is a major railway hub with 1,250 trains and 240,000 people passing through in 24 hours, the city and Stuttgart, the province, the regional district and German Rail agreed to an entire new railway station after about 10 years of planning and overcoming of legal obstacles. The new station will encompass 10 acres and be built totally underground with the main objective to have a straight through passage of all trains. The project expenditure will be around 6 billion euro or about \$8 billion.

The project is part of the "Magistrale Europe" connecting five countries and 35 million people from Paris to Strassburg, Stuttgart, Munich, Bratislava, Vienna and Budapest with a 1,500 km high-speed electric train run at 250 kilometres per hour. The result will be that tens of thousands of people will be moved on these trains every day, save, quickly, comfortable, efficient and with a minimum impact on the environment for future generations.

In comparison, how did we in BC spend \$8 billion the last time?

In a province of fewer than four million people and three times the size of Germany, our government did not find enough worthwhile infrastructure projects to spend this amount of money in a meaningful way. It seems like they are unaware of how many dilapidated gravel roads and snail trails we have outside of Vancouver, Victoria and the Lower Mainland, especially in areas where the government takes in billions of its revenue from natural resources like oil and gas, minerals and forestry. In their unfathomable wisdom, the government provided for the domestic and international elite a two week glitzy show to cater and dazzle to an audience eager for excitement

and spectacle at the Olympic Winter Games. Certainly we did get a few infrastructure projects out of it but, unfortunately in a very limited geographical area for a very limited, specific and narrow use, mainly to train future Olympic athletes.

How much do the billions spend on this spectacle benefit the rest of BC in the past, now or in the future? I wish myself or anybody else would have a convincing argument in support of this question.

Looking at our Canadian history of Olympic Games in Montreal in 1976 and Calgary in 1986, none of these cities could honestly claim that their future development was boosted as a result of the games. Mismanagement, cost overrun and a heavy debt burden have been a drain to the city of Montreal and its taxpayers for more than a generation. After the Olympic Games, Calgary had a phenomenal development only after the price of oil and gas started to move up dramatically at the beginning of the new millennium.

I am afraid that our billions of investment in "excitement, spectacle and fun" will not generate much of any return for our province as a whole. With the economic downturn, a substantial legacy of debt and high taxes will be with us for generations to come. We can only hope that one day at least we would have politicians to look somewhere else for investment ideas, which carry us into a prosperous future since they are unable to come up with such ideas of their own.

Tony Stoeckl

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