

British Columbia is in desperate need of an independent, arm's length regulator which has the authority, capacity, and expertise to scrutinize proposed projects. The purpose of the regulator must be *to serve the public interest*. It is hard to see how the public interest is being served under the present system. We have just gone through a Site C "Environmental Assessment" hearing. No testimony under oath; no cross-examination; no capacity for any intervenors other than the proponent to provide evidence. As a Crown Corporation, BC Hydro's funds are public money. So the public pays for the proponent's massively expensive preparation for a hearing, and if members of the public wish to participate, they must also pay to do that.

Although BC Hydro rate-payers are responsible for Hydro's present substantial debt, and are ultimately responsible for the cost of Site C, the evidence on the cost of Site C fit on one sheet of paper. The numbers added neatly to \$7.9 billion. No breakdown, no analysis, no capacity for rate-payers to hire professional analysis or provide contrary evidence. The EA Report provided the information that the \$7.9 billion cost was a "Stage 3" estimate, which allows for a range of minus 15% or plus 30% and still be within the approved range.

Even the EA Panel recognized the inadequacy of the EA process to deal with need or cost and recommended that the project be referred to the BC Utilities Commission. But that is only of use if the BCUC has the authority, capacity and expertise to properly examine the project in an open and transparent process, and if the mandate of the Commission is to serve the public interest.

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