

Watt's Happening? #117

by Don Pettit

for Peace Energy Renewable Energy Cooperative

www.peaceenergy.ca ph 250-782-3882



SOLAR and SITE C



BC is rich in the “new” resources of wind and solar energy, two of the cleanest and most cost-effective energy sources in existence. And these new energy sources, like the jobs that go with them, will last forever.

The BC Utilities Commission has just released its final report on the Site C dam, and has basically given it a big thumbs down.

In summary (with my comments added):

1) The project is expected to come in neither on time nor on budget. Completion costs will probably exceed \$10 billion, not the proposed \$8.3 billion (those in the know expect it to exceed \$12

billion, all of it borrowed money).

2) Comparing the costs of continuing, suspending or terminating, suspending the project and restarting it later is by far the most costly option. (Not recommended.)

3) Termination and remediation will cost about \$1.8 billion. (So if you're working on the project now, your job is probably secure for another few years while the mess already made

is cleaned up.)

4) BC Hydro's forecast of future energy needs is “overly optimistic.” (meaning greatly exaggerated. In other words, we don't need the power.)

5) But if we do need more power, the Panel believes that alternative energy sources would create similar benefits to Site C (jobs, cheap and plentiful power, etc.) at “equal or lower Unit Energy Cost.”

I would add that the alternative energy options like wind and solar can be phased in over time as needed, as opposed to the politically ever-popular mega-project boom and bust cycle.

Spreading the benefits across the province and across time with wind and solar would provide longer-term benefit to more people and more businesses with a much lower environmental impact than Site C.

It would also give us a chance, finally, to play “catch up” with the rest of the world and move into the 21st century where jobs, the economy and the environment are no longer at odds.

So as BC struggles to find a rational and reasonable path to a clean energy future, the rest of the world is moving even further ahead of us.

CRAZY FOR SOLAR

For several years, solar power has been growing around the world faster than any other energy technology, but in the last two years it's gone crazy.

Last year, China more than doubled its installed solar capacity. This year, India will increase its installed solar capacity by a factor of seven (to 100 gigawatts by 2022), making it the third largest solar power market in the world.

In the words of India's energy minister: “I think a new coal plant would give you costlier power than a solar plant.”

Last year, the U.S. almost doubled its installed solar capacity, in spite of the totally inept energy confusion at the Trump White House.

In fact, some of the fastest-growing U.S. markets for solar power were in heavy Trump states: Alabama saw an almost 6000% increase in new

solar investment, Mississippi 3000%, Minnesota and Montana over 1000%. Even Trump can't stop solar.

The reason for this is no secret. The cost of solar, due to extreme mass production ramp-up, has plummeted, so that in many parts of the world solar is now the cheapest source of power available, even cheaper than burning dirty coal.

And that's all without factoring in the environmental and health costs of burning fossil fuels. These costs, often hidden, are immense and getting more immense as climate change kicks in.

It is a common criticism of renewable energy that it's being propped up by government subsidies (as if conventional energy isn't!). But study after study has proven that such subsidies save lives by reducing pollution, and that overall the benefits equal or exceed the costs.

We don't usually measure the cost of energy as cases of cancer per kilowatt, but if we did solar and wind would be cheaper by far.

The BC Utilities Commission has in essence concluded that we don't need Site C, and that there are better ways to make electricity now.

I agree, and will add that these better ways of making energy will create more and better, longer-term jobs, developing new clean resources our province is rich in. And these new energy sources, like the jobs that go with them, will last forever.

If you're not sure how practical all this talk about new energy is, just look around. The rest of the world is proving it every day.

We don't usually measure the cost of energy as cases of cancer per kilowatt, but if we did solar and wind would be cheaper by far.