



Dam lie – Site C is a recipe for financial, cultural and ecological disaster

by Joe Foy



Arlene and Arlene Boon on their home farm that has been in Arlene's family for three generations. The Boon's put up the Site C dam's reservoir proposed high water mark sign. Photo – Joe Foy/Wilderness Committee

• There are lies, damn lies, and in BC, there are also dam lies. British Columbians are amazing. Having spent time in the Peace River Valley this summer, I am in awe of the thoughtful, quiet determination I saw in the people undergoing the greatest of calamities: the looming loss of their homes, land, history and future – all to support a politician's lie.

In many other parts of the world, people would be in open revolt in opposition to this kind of stupid injustice. But not here. Here, the people hold on to the hope, against all odds, that truth, justice and sanity will eventually prevail.

The Site C Dam, to be built by BC Hydro – under orders from BC Premier Christy Clark – with more than \$9 billion of public debt, on the Peace River near Fort St. John, threatens to drown everything for over 80 kilometres upstream, including farms, gravesites, wildlife and spiritual areas. The history of settlers and First Nations alike erased. And all of this damage is completely unnecessary, driven by a lie – a dam lie.

You can read the lie in the preface of a recent BC Hydro poll: "Is the idea of building Site C, a new hydroelectric dam, to help meet the rising demand for electricity in BC, an idea you strongly support, support, can accept under certain circumstances, oppose, or strongly oppose?"

Here's the thing: electricity demand in BC has been flat-lining since 2005. There is no rising demand for electricity, and BC currently produces a massive overabundance of it. Export energy prices are averaging \$45.10/MWh, which is much lower than the \$100/MWh that Site C Dam power would cost. If Site C Dam were to be built, BC would need to export its power at a staggering loss. It's a recipe for financial disaster and good reason to not flood this huge, productive valley.

You could say, that instead of bedrock, Site C Dam would be built upon Premier Clark's lie.

This is no little lie. This is a big, nasty lie, which is already causing severe damage. The BC government likes to say the Site C Dam would power-up more than 450,000 homes when completed. But the fact is it will power-up no homes in BC because we already have more than enough power to do that for decades, far into the foreseeable future.

What the Site C Dam will do is destroy homes. Third-generation farmer Arlene Boon and her husband Ken know that all too well. They were recently told they could either sell their farm home to BC Hydro or be expropriated. Either way, they were told to make way for a new road right-of-way, needed to replace the old road that would be flooded by the Site C Dam. The Boons were told to be out of their own home by this Christmas.

There are those that believe that both the location of the new road and the timetable for construction have been changed to force the Boons, who are vocal opponents of the dam, off their land as soon as possible. It's stuff like this that causes people to lose faith in their government.

All over Peace country, residents like the Boons are not sleeping so well these days. That would include the members of the West Moberly and Prophet River First Nations. They are going to court to defend their treaty rights to hunt and fish and live within their own territory – rights that would be drowned under Site C's reservoir. At risk are not only the life they live today, but also their past, their gravesites and ancient spiritual places. Their future, too, hangs in the balance. What will the lives of the generations going forward be like with the Peace under water?

Their case will be heard in federal court in Montreal in September. Canadians across the nation are stepping up to help fund the court challenge by donating to Raven Trust (raventrust.com). In the meantime, the people of West Moberly and Prophet River are left to worry if Canadian justice will arrive in time.

They have good reason to worry. Premier Clark has said she will get the Site C Dam project past the point of no return. What she means is she will sign so many contracts with construction companies and material providers that no court would be able to overturn her dam agenda. It also means that tree clearing crews will have cut down so many eagle trees and cleared so many deer and moose birthing areas that the damage will be un-repairable.

The Prime Minister of Canada could have put an end to all this waste, destruction and human rights abuses, but he has chosen to allow federal permits to be issued allowing the ongoing Site C debacle to continue.

So is the Site C Dam really past the point of no return?

No – not even close. Despite doing her worst, the premier of BC has not yet wreaked enough damage or spent enough public money to lock-in Site C.

Prime Minister Trudeau should get a backbone and own up to his election promises of environmental protection and First Nations reconciliation. He still has the power to stop this damn dam and should do so now – while he still has a shred of honour left.

The premier's dam lie is powering billions of dollars of public money into big business bank accounts. The Site C Dam would blow a hole in BC Hydro so large it would wallow in red ink, making it all too simple to sell off the indebted public power utility to the private sector at some point down the road. But the dirty deed is not yet done.

As more and more people become aware and engaged, hope grows that Premier Clark's dam that was built on a lie will come tumbling down.

Ever wonder what the C in Site C Dam stands for? I say it stands for crumbling.

–

Joe Foy is the national campaign director for the Wilderness Committee.

What you can do to help stop the Site C Dam

Go to: www.wildernesscommittee.org/sitec, visit the Wilderness Committee at 46 E. 6th Ave in Vancouver, or phone 604-683-8220.

Raven Trust is raising funds to help pay First Nation's legal costs associated with fighting the Site C dam. To donate go to: <http://raventrust.com/join-the-circle-no-site-c/>

LeadNow is raising funds to help a First Nations' caravan head to Montreal for a court case against the Site C dam in mid-September. To donate go to: www.leadnow.ca/stop-site-c/

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One thought on “Dam lie – Site C is a recipe for financial, cultural and ecological disaster”

Amy Meyer
In view of how serious and critical the timing is. Are there any grassroots efforts to recall our Premier and her crew?

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