



September 3, 2015

Climate Leadership Plan Discussion Paper Submission

Today, BC's gas comes from hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) in the northeastern corner of the province. The old conventional gas reserves that did not require the use of fracking are almost entirely gone. To be exact, 90% of all new wells drilled in BC that would supply the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry will be fracked.

Extracting gas in this unconventional way involves fracturing shale rock with a toxic mixture called "frac fluid". It demands massive amounts of freshwater, industrializes large areas of BC, and changes the climate.

From wellheads to processing plants on our west coast, the LNG industry as proposed will have two separate climate impacts: methane will be emitted from leakages and venting at the extraction stage and carbon dioxide will be emitted from the burning of gas for power at the processing state. Both are Greenhouse Gases (GHGs), with methane being the more powerful climate pollutant in the short term.

The BC Climate Leadership Team is tasked with developing a plan to reduce GHGs which result from the production and consumption of coal, gas and oil. In 2008, those activities prompted the BC Government to commit the province to reductions in GHGs to 33% below 2007 levels by 2020, and 80% by 2050. These reductions are essential if we are to avoid the worst of climate change.

In reality, creating a giant new fossil fuel industry is inconsistent with an actual reduction of GHGs. It's a bit like wanting to contribute to a global campaign to end smoking while constructing a collection of brand new cigarette factories (albeit producing the filtered type, maybe).

The Pembina Institute's submission to the Leadership Team contains the following line:

"If the LNG development goes ahead at a scale in line with the province's ambitions and policies remain unchanged, carbon pollution would increase significantly, putting the province's climate targets out of reach"¹.

We couldn't agree more.

We do not see how an effective climate plan can be devised that simultaneously incorporates an important reduction in GHGs, and an aggressive expansion of BC LNG. Additionally, from a global perspective, there is no evidence that BC's gas will prevent coal from being burned in Asia.

¹ <http://www.pembina.org/reports/2015-08-15-climate-leadership-plan-submission.pdf>

Even if LNG were to replace coal, a debate persists over whether or not unconventional (or “fracked”) gas is actually a climate-saving replacement for coal, due to its intensive methane-related climate impact. Should just three of the dozen or more LNG terminals proposed for BC’s west coast be constructed, they will produce 36 million tonnes of GHGs every year, and make meeting our 2050 GHG targets impossible².

BC’s Climate Leadership Team seeks to have a wide, all-encompassing and inclusive membership. It always helps to look elsewhere for examples of how teams like ours are chosen, especially when they seek to work towards the same end. In Washington state, our nearest southern neighbor, a team of 21 advisors (called the Carbon Emissions Reduction Taskforce, or “CERT”) was struck by the State’s governor to take on the challenge of developing policy on climate solutions late last year. Business leaders, as in BC, took a seat at the table.

It is only when the list of business leaders in both jurisdictions are compared that a major difference becomes apparent. In Washington, the business group consisted of utilities who deliver power to the local grid, a forestry operation, a solar and wind energy supplier (EDF), and an airline. On BC’s team, it’s a forestry operation, the ubiquitous airline (odd), a former executive at BC Hydro, and a representative of the LNG Industry.

Washington State invited in a solar and wind energy supplier, and BC invited in the LNG industry. Given that the former will supply GHG-free energy, and the latter will not, this could create a problem. We believe that all who have an interest in the issue ought to be engaged, so long as the team’s objective is never forgotten: the reduction of BC’s GHGs.

We hope that the vision and courage necessary to safeguard our children’s future is present when the team deliberates. It’s not easy to say, but if the BC government is truly committed to tackling climate change, we need to walk away from the concept of creating an LNG industry in BC. That is what the increasing climate impacts (read forest fires, droughts, algae blooms) are stating. Unfortunately, both cannot co-exist.

² Ibid.