

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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May 26, 2020

Honourable Bruce Ralston
Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum
Resources
Via Email Only: EMPR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable George Heyman
Minster of Environment and Climate Strategy
Via Email Only: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
Via Email Only: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

OPEN LETTER: Call for Moratorium on Fracking Near Peace River Dams

Dear Minister Ralston, Minister Heyman, and Minister Donaldson:

We are writing with respect to the negligence and operation of oversights carried forth by BC Hydro in regard to their Peace River Dams, and we demand immediate action to address the fracking activities that pose unacceptable risks to these dams and the surrounding region.

By UBCIC Resolution 2020-06, “Call for Moratorium on Fracking Near Peace River Dams,” which was endorsed unanimously at the UBCIC Chiefs Council on February 27, 2020 (enclosed), the UBCIC raised the dangers posed by fracking and disposal well operations in the Peace River Region that include the exacerbation of existing faults throughout the region, the triggering of earthquakes and floods, and the severe structural compromising of developing and completed dams. Given these concerns that were also raised and explored in depth in Ben Parfitt’s report, “Peace River Frack-Up,” the UBCIC calls upon the Province to immediately initiate and enforce a moratorium on all fracking activities near the Peace River Dams. Furthermore, it is vital that the Province ensures that further oil, gas and hydroelectric development in the region respects Dunne-za (Beaver people) Title and Rights, as well as their reliance on the Peace River valley as a vital component of their livelihoods and cultural identity.

In his report for the B.C. Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Parfitt drew upon internal correspondence and documents from BC Hydro to reveal that the corporation has known since the 1970’s that its Peace Canyon dam was built on weak, unstable rock, and that an earthquake triggered by a nearby natural gas industry fracking operation could cause the dam to fail due to foundational problems. It is dangerous and irresponsible for oil and gas companies to continue fracking in this area, and for BC Hydro to continue construction of its Site C dam knowing that disposal and fracking sites could re-activate existing faults and fractures in the region. Besides the hazards associated with the Site C Dam site, there

is also the Peace Canyon Dam and W.A.C Bennet Dam upstream that could fail and cause disastrous effects downstream.

Compounding the structural and environmental risks of fracking and BC Hydro's dam operations are the violations of Indigenous Title and Rights that have been incurred throughout the Site C Dam's development. Previously, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on Canada to suspend the Site C Project until it received the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples, in keeping with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* that your government recently enshrined in law. Should a structural failure occur, the Site C Dam could flood Indigenous burial sites and traditional hunting and fishing grounds, poisoning bull trout and other food fish with methylmercury. In addition, the transmission of COVID-19 amongst workers has been a pressing concern that we previously raised in our open letter to Premier Horgan and Minister Dix on March 20, 2020 calling for a moratorium on Site C Dam construction. An outbreak of COVID-19 at any of the construction sites in the Peace River Region would be disastrous and with dire implications for nearby communities.

Ultimately, the most effective way to limit the risk of COVID-19, earthquakes, dam failure, and flooding, as well as the consequences for Indigenous communities, workers, and residents, is by halting dam operations and banning disposal sites and fracking anyway near BC Hydro's Peace River Dams – including the W.A.C Bennet Dam, the Peace Canyon Dam, and the Site C Dam. UBCIC stands with and supports West Moberly First Nation and other Indigenous communities in demanding that the Province implement this ban immediately and to respect the cultural, spiritual and physical ties they have to their traditional territories.

We look forward to your response.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Chief Don Tom
Vice-President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: West Moberly First Nations