

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

FOUNDING HEAD OFFICE
209 - 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way
Kamloops, B.C. V2H 1H1
Tel: 250-828-9746
Fax: 250-828-0319



VANCOUVER OFFICE
401 - 312 Main Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 2T2
Tel: 604-684-0231
Fax: 604-684-5726
1-800-793-9701
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

News Release

January 18, 2021

Unsafe in Every Sense: Site C Dam Construction Must Be Immediately Halted

((X^wməθk^wəy^əm (Musqueam), Sk^wx^wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C. – January 18, 2021) A new report by Premier Horgan’s special advisor on Site C provides yet another reason why this massively destructive and massively over-budget project must be stopped.

“The province has all the reasons it could possibly need to shut down this boondoggle,” stated Grand Chief Stewart, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). “After five months of study, it has been confirmed that the report of special advisor Peter Milburn, which still awaits cabinet and public scrutiny, could not identify any safe way to complete Site C. Furthermore, Premier Horgan has revealed that the province has hired two international experts to conduct additional reviews in light of Milburn’s lack of capacity to address safety challenges related to geotechnical issues. The continued search for and lack of solutions is highly alarming and confirms what First Nations have been saying all along: the integrity and validity of the Site C Dam is elusive and fundamentally imperiled. Construction of Site C is destroying the precious and irreplaceable Peace River Valley – and wasting billions of dollars that the province can’t afford – all for a project that will almost certainly never be completed.”

The West Moberly First Nations have Treaty-protected rights to hunt, fish, trap and practice their traditional way of life in the Peace River Valley. A legal challenge by West Moberly, scheduled to be heard in court before the dam is completed, alleges that flooding the Peace River Valley is an unjustifiable violation of these Constitutionally protected rights and therefore must be stopped.

Meanwhile, the United Nations’ top anti-racism body has once again reiterated concerns that construction of the Site C dam violates Canada’s international human rights obligations. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is the independent, non-governmental expert body responsible for oversight of a binding anti-racism treaty ratified by

Canada more than a half-century ago. In 2017 and 2019, the CERD called for an immediate halt to construction of Site C. In a November 2020 letter to Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, made public this month, the Committee once again flagged its ongoing concern over the project and expressed "regret" over Canada's misinterpretation of its human rights obligations.

Chief Don Tom, UBCIC Vice President, stated, "In a move that betrays all efforts to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, the federal and provincial governments tried to convince the UN anti-racism committee that destroying the Peace River Valley was consistent with Canada's human rights commitments. The independent experts clearly weren't fooled. This highly discriminatory and dishonest conduct of Canada may be a preview of what will happen if the province continues to fight for Site C in court. Additionally, we support the widespread calls to suspend construction during the COVID-19 pandemic out of fear that an outbreak at the work camp could overwhelm local communities, including highly vulnerable First Nations. BC Hydro has already confirmed 35 separate cases of COVID-19 at the work site."

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, UBCIC Secretary-Treasurer, concluded, "Site C isn't a dam, it's a money pit. It is inconceivable that BC Hydro is reportedly spending \$100 million every month to continue construction, despite the countless critical concerns and the irrefutable fact that the dam may never be completed. The province continues to bleed cash for an unstable project that continues to endanger the Title and Rights of First Nations and the health and safety of many communities. It is evident the financial interests of British Columbia must be aligned with First Nation Title and Rights – aligned with the preservation and conservation of our environment and the continued stewardship of our lands and waters for generations to come. It's time for Premier Horgan to do the right thing and shut this boondoggle down before any more harm is done."

-30-

Media inquiries:

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President (250-490-5314)

Chief Don Tom, Vice-President (250-813-3315)

Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary-Treasurer (via 604-842-2977)

UBCIC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

For more information please visit www.ubcic.bc.ca