

Keep the Power Public

Contributed by Doug Morrison
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A letter to the editor published in the Squamish Chief:

The Ledcor Ashlu IPP rezoning should be rejected again for all the same good reasons of community, recreational and tourism values that still apply as they did in January 2005.

And in rejecting the rezoning, SLRD directors should rest easy that they are also standing up for the greater good of the all businesses and families in British Columbia as well. Because despite the insinuation of the catch phrase "We need the power" constantly used by IPP proponents and Ministry of Energy, which is helping them force the rezoning, this electrical power is ultimately not for British Columbians. After a brief contract with BC Hydro which quickly recovers all the capital costs of the project, private power can be sold to the North American market for many times our B.C. prices, using our own transmission lines to facilitate the export.

Thus IPPs alienate both economical power and the power sites from British Columbians forever. Every major government and private power player in the current confrontation with the SLRD is aware of the intent to export, because of the vastly higher price that the US market pays, and yet they continue to pretend that this power is for B.C.

There can be no question in their minds that there is a phenomenal profit to be made exporting this power, or holding us to ransom to buy back our own resources at North American rates in the very near future.

That is precisely why the stakes are so high in the current rezoning application, and it is also precisely why the application should be refused again.

It's perfectly fine and proper for Ledcor to provide staffing and other support for Premier Gordon Campbell's election campaign as they have done, but nothing justifies giving away, to any company, any of our run-of-the-river power sites worth tens of millions of dollars of power for the paltry \$10,000 water licence fee currently charged without any public bidding process – and that includes the jewel of them all, the Ashlu, which should particularly be preserved for its community, recreational and tourism values.

The SLRD and the people of this province need a proper planning process for our future power needs, and a return to public power, the "powerhouse" of the British Columbia economy.

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