

by Joe Foy

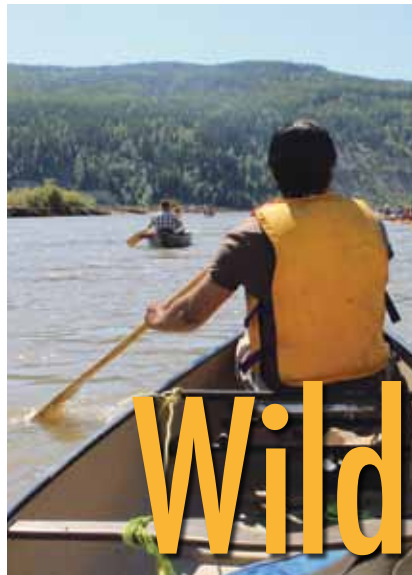
The more I look at the proposed Site C Dam project, the more it looks to me like a rusting ship, drifting in the ocean, its engine dead, rudder waiving aimlessly in the waves, its captain and crew long gone for calmer waters. How long will it drift and how much damage will occur when it finally hits the rocks, no one knows for sure.

But what I do know is this: All British Columbians had better pay very close attention right now to this hulk of a mega-project – or we'll surely be paying and paying and paying in the future.

BC Hydro's Site C Dam project rose from the dead in the early days of the Gordon Campbell government. I say rose from the dead because this massively expensive and damaging white elephant of a dam had twice been turned down by the provincial energy review panel known as the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC). The BCUC has consistently ruled that the new monster dam is clearly not in the public interest.

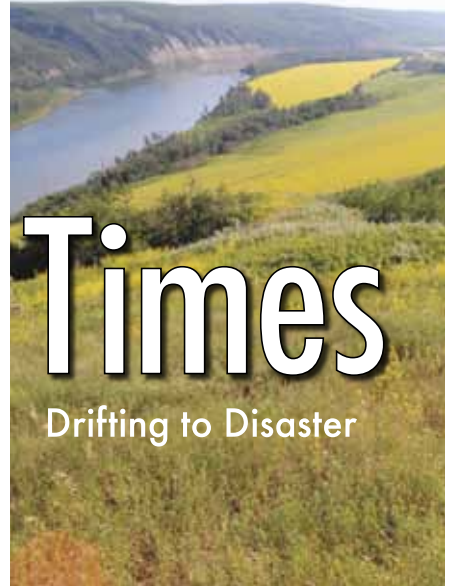
Early in his tenure Premier Gordon Campbell had rolled out his BC energy plan with all sorts of good words about protecting the environment by producing green energy. He proceeded to allow the staking of hundreds of BC rivers and streams by private hydro power companies. He then later declared that BC Hydro would build the Site C Dam on the Peace River near Fort Saint John. In Campbell's vision, BC would produce a huge amount of so called green energy that could be sold at a great profit to California. And because Site C and the private hydro power plants would produce green energy, there would be no need for BCUC oversight.

When it became apparent that California would not be buying our so-called green power, Mr. Campbell's government in Victoria simply declared that the private power projects and the Site C Dam would be needed to keep the lights on in people's homes in Vancouver and Victoria. And the ship that Mr. Campbell had launched just kept drifting along as the government ordered BC Hydro to plan Site C Dam construction.



Canoes drifting down the Peace river in the 2012 Paddle for the Peace event

A small part of the Peace River farmland that would be drowned if Site C Dam went ahead



Drifting to Disaster

Today Captain Campbell is long gone and the private power plants and the looming Site C Dam project are producing an ever growing vortex of debt, environmental degradation with a great risk of more to come.

BC Hydro, once a revenue generator for the people of BC, is now projected to lose \$1 billion over the next four years – largely due to the purchase of ri-

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diculously expensive hydro power from the private operators. BC has a surplus of hydro power – just as the Site C Dam project is working its way through a joint provincial and federal environmental review.

It's going to take an army of lawyers to get out of the crazy expensive private power contracts the BC government has already signed. But the Site C Dam isn't built yet. It's not too late to save ourselves a lot of hurt.

The Site C Dam is projected to cost over \$8 billion – though its likely the cost would spiral to north of \$10 billion due to the unstable ground under and around the proposed dam site – all for electrical power we don't need and could only sell at a loss to the coal, oil and gas industry.

Yes, you read that right. The only ones who could ever use Site C Dam power would be the dirtiest of BC's industries. So much for green power. And it's not likely even these industries would buy Site C power at the high cost necessary to build the dam – so in the end the ratepayers and taxpayers (that's you and me) would be subsidizing the coal, oil and gas industries.

Little wonder that so many people have come out against the Site C Dam. The aboriginal owners of the region, the Treaty 8 group of First Nations, have declared their strong opposition. As have many of the farming families in the valley. The Site C Dam, if built would drown over 100 kilometres of precious valley bottom farmland, wild life habitat and First Nations sites.

In a province with not enough farm land and too much electricity – it's time to sink the Site C Dam once and for all.



Joe Foy is Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee, Canada's largest citizen-funded membership-based wilderness preservation organization.