

## Duke Point Plant – Political Pressure Required! - Bob McKechnie

At time of writing, the GSX Coalition of Concerned Citizens and the Joint Industry Electric Steering Committee are studying Appeal Judge Thackray's reasons for denying leave to appeal the BC Utilities Commission approval of the Duke Point power plant. They are now deciding whether or not to apply for a reconsideration of the judge's decision. [THIS JUST IN: [GSXCCC fight continues at Appeals Court](#)] On April 20th Judge Thackray released his reasons for denying the leave for appeal in a lengthy document which may be found through [www.sqwalk.com](http://www.sqwalk.com). His reasoning is probably best summarized in the following sentence: *"There may well be strong arguments to be made by ratepayers and concerned citizens as to the most cost-effective answer to the envisioned energy shortage on Vancouver Island, but those have been made to the Commission. The matters upon which this Court has jurisdiction arise out of procedural and jurisdictional issues, and on those I cannot find "substantial questions to be argued."* BC Hydro has responded by saying they do not expect to take any further steps towards completion of the Electricity Purchase Agreement with Pristine Power until the appeal matters have been dealt with.

Regardless of what happens in the courts, it is clear that something has gone very wrong in a public process which has managed to so far give the green light to an Alberta-based consortium of investors to build the unnecessary, costly, and environmentally degrading Duke Point plant in the face of strong opposition from citizens, industrial customers, and environmental organizations. It is clear to Gabriola's NoGasPlant group that the time has come for a massive public appeal to the Campbell government to, through order-in-council, cancel the Electricity Purchase Agreement and direct BC Hydro to pursue more acceptable alternatives. If you want to help keep your electricity costs low and avoid this needless degradation of the environment and affront to human health and sensibility, we urge you to take some time to write every BC politician and election candidate you can. At a minimum - [gordon.campbell.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:gordon.campbell.mla@leg.bc.ca), [richard.neufeld.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:richard.neufeld.mla@leg.bc.ca), [mike.hunter.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:mike.hunter.mla@leg.bc.ca), and [carole@bc.ndp.ca](mailto:carole@bc.ndp.ca). FAX and regular mail addresses can be obtained through Enquiry BC (1 800 663-7867), as can the addresses of other BC politicians.

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All non-Liberal candidates in the area canvassed by the NoGasPlant group have declared themselves to be opposed to the Duke Point plant, or have said the same thing through their party leaders. At time of writing, the Liberals are saying basically that they won't interfere with the BCUC process and decision, even though:

1. It's obvious the plant makes no sense economically and environmentally, and that something has gone terribly wrong with public process;
2. The Environmental Assessment Act was gutted during the Liberal regime, midway through the VIGP EA review. Gutted act required only that the plant meet existing standards (none for CO2), without regard to environmental impacts or usefulness - thus allowing the plant to pass the EA;
3. The plant contravenes the BC Liberal's recent *Climate Change Plan* and Canada's recent Kyoto commitment;
4. The BCUC, which is overseen by the BC government, ruled sensible alternatives like conservation, peak shifting, and fast-tracking the new undersea cable out of scope, and failed to consider environmental and social costs in its review of the EPA;
5. The BCUC has decided, apparently on its own, to revise its Resource Planning Guidelines to state that it now sees its role as implementing the government's energy policy.
6. Gordon Campbell in 2004 spoke out strongly against the proposed US gas-fired generation plant at Sumas - bad for the health of Fraser Valley residents, etc . . . .

There's much more to be said about this travesty. If you need more information, please visit [www.sgwalk.com](http://www.sgwalk.com). Start by looking for a fact-sheet/backgrounder I will have posted there by the time you read this. As well, virtually every Sounder in the past 6 months has articles discussing the plant's problems. Another excellent source of information is the collection of letters (many by Gabriola and Mudge Island residents) submitted to the BCUC during the Nanaimo Town Hall Meeting on Jan 15/05. These may be found as 'Hearing Transcript Vol 5' on the BCUC website - [www.bcuc.com/ApplicationView.aspx?ApplicationId=62](http://www.bcuc.com/ApplicationView.aspx?ApplicationId=62).

And don't forget to help create sadly lacking media interest by powering down 4:30-7:30 pm May 3<sup>rd</sup> to 'Beat the Peak' !