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For Immediate Release

No Gas Plant Coalition  
Gabriola Island, BC  
(Submitted by Erik Andersen)

## Coalition says No! to gas-fired power plants

A citizens' group from the Gulf Islands has called on BC Premier Gordon Campbell to halt construction of the controversial Duke Point Power project and place a moratorium on the burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity.

"The Duke Point plant, if built, will produce more than 800,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year it operates," says Bob McKechnie, spokesman for the Gabriola Island based No Gas Plant Coalition. "This flies in the face of Canada's recently-signed Kyoto commitment as well as the BC government's own *Climate Change Plan*. Recent studies have shown that although natural gas is a relatively clean fuel, it results in noxious emissions when burned. Our health will be affected by this plant."

In February, the BC Utilities Commission approved an Energy Purchase Agreement between BC Hydro and Pristine Power, a consortium of investors headquartered in Alberta. Under the agreement, Pristine Power will build and operate the plant, selling electricity to BC Hydro according to a complicated formula that BC Hydro has refused to fully reveal to the public. Construction was to begin in early March, but is on hold pending appeals filed by Vancouver Island industry and concerned citizens. BC Hydro is now trying to hurry the matter through the BC Court of Appeal.

BC Hydro has consistently maintained that Vancouver Island will begin experiencing power shortages in the next two to three years if the Duke Point plant is not built. It began planning for the plant in 2001, after similar proposals were blocked by public protest in other communities, but its plan was rejected by the BCUC last year on the grounds that it was not proven to be the least costly option for ratepayers. Pristine Power's nearly identical proposal will use the same site and the same equipment - including assets worth \$120 million, which it will purchase from BC Hydro for \$50 million.

McKechnie, a retired professional engineer, was among the fifty intervenors and hundreds of citizens who told the BCUC hearing in January that the Duke Point plant would create an expensive, unnecessary, and unwanted environmental hazard. His view is supported by industry engineers. "With proper management on BC Hydro's part, Vancouver Island won't experience peak capacity shortfalls if the plant isn't built," he says. "There are other simpler and less costly alternatives."

McKechnie says a combination of proper load management on BC Hydro's part and the adoption of two or three ready-to-go non-fossil generation proposals will provide all the peak-capacity protection that's needed on Vancouver Island until a new undersea cable from the mainland comes on stream in 2008. "With the new cable coming, there's time to further conservation efforts and start developing the island's abundant green/sustainable electricity resources," he says, "Building a \$370-million gas-fired generation plant to deal with a simple short-term peak capacity problem is like going out and buying a chainsaw to cut butter."

The No Gas Plant Coalition has sent a letter to Premier Gordon Campbell, asking him to halt construction of the Duke Point plant and forbid further generation projects that would rely on fossil fuels. It hopes other groups and individuals will sign and support the letter, and back its protest to the premier. It is calling on all citizens to demand that their government representatives honour commitments to green energy and clean environments.

In its letter, the No Gas Plant Coalition says BC Hydro has exaggerated the population growth and energy needs of Vancouver Island to justify building the Duke Point plant. It accuses Hydro of ignoring other strategies that promote green energy and conservation. "It is a matter of record that the largest industrial user of electricity on Vancouver Island has submitted a clear plan that would cause the reduction of the offending demand peak by up to 140MW," says the letter. "This is not some meddlesome on-the-margin proposal, but a large and truly beneficial economic option. An option dismissed by the BCUC and BC Hydro in favour of spending many hundreds of millions of dollars on a new and senseless natural gas-burning facility."

The letter also says that Hydro is promoting a fiction with its estimates of gas costs for the plant. "Too bad we, as captive customers, aren't able to pay in fictitious dollars," says the letter.

It asks Premier Campbell to stand by the promise that he made in his recent budget: "To lead the world in sustainable environmental management, with the best air and water quality, and the best fisheries management, bar none."

"We intend to have every candidate in this May election state for the record just how committed he or she is to the commendable goals your government has set down," says the letter. "We are characterizing this occasion as a test of your Government's commitment to its word."

For more information, go to [www.sqwalk.com](http://www.sqwalk.com) and/or contact Bob McKechnie at 250 247-8197 ([bobmck@shaw.ca](mailto:bobmck@shaw.ca)) or Erik Andersen at [moonbayhouse@shaw.ca](mailto:moonbayhouse@shaw.ca)