

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS CALL FOR FULL PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR B.C.'S COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS

SEPTEMBER 11, 2006—Nine B.C. provincial organizations today released a letter to B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell calling for full public hearings to be included in environmental assessments of B.C.'s first two coal-fired power plants.

Current B.C. guidelines would allow coal-fired plants in Princeton and Tumbler Ridge to emit more pollution than the proposed Sumas II gas-fired power plant in Washington State, which the B.C. Liberal government rightly opposed because of air quality concerns, says the letter to Premier Campbell.

The letter is signed by the Sierra Club of Canada (BC Chapter), David Suzuki Foundation, BC Sustainable Energy Association, Dogwood Initiative, One Sky, Living Oceans Society, GSX Concerned Citizens Coalition, Federation of BC Naturalists, and Wildsight.

According to the environmental groups' preliminary estimates, the Tumbler Ridge and Princeton coal-fired power plants would emit 70 times more nitrogen oxide, 260 times more sulfur dioxide and seven times more particulate matter than the proposed Sumas II, as well as toxic mercury emissions.

“There is no basis for describing these proposed plants as ‘clean coal’, as [Richard Neufeld] the Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources has done,” states the two-page letter. “As proposed, these plants would emit large amounts of air pollutants and vent hundreds of thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases each year.”

The decision to commit B.C. to a coal-fired electricity strategy was made without public discussion or consultation, the groups point out. Compared with conventional energy such as coal, sustainable energy initiatives such as wind, solar, tidal and small hydro projects can reduce B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions, create more jobs per unit of power, drive more economic growth, reduce air pollutants and improve human health.

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