

## OPINION-EDITORIAL

### **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PLANNING TOP PRIORITY**

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(475 words)

In British Columbia we have enjoyed the luxury of generating all the electricity we needed for the last 40 years. We are one of number of jurisdictions that can boast one of the cheapest and cleanest sources of power. The 2002 Energy Plan set a goal to have 50 per cent of new electricity supply coming from BC Clean electricity. That was the highest goal in North America. To date, including the results of BC Hydro's latest call for power in July, 80 per cent of all new electricity since 2002 is BC Clean. This is important to British Columbians and unheard of in most parts of Canada and the world.

With our thriving economy fuelling the need for increasing amounts of electricity, there is a growing gap emerging between domestic supply and demand. As a result, we need to make sure we can produce enough electricity to meet our needs.

Maintaining electricity self-sufficiency, in an environmentally sustainable way, is a cornerstone for achieving our goal of leadership on environment sustainability. Conservation is our first way to address this. But we are also looking at a wide variety of alternative energy sources, be it wind, thermal, solar, ocean, biomass or coal-fired electricity. It is naïve to think that any one source of power can possibly meet all our needs as different sources will produce either firm power (always there when you need it) or non-firm power (e.g. wind, which depends on certain conditions). The response from independent power producers to the 2006 Call for Power reflects this diversity and helps ensure that the provincial electricity needs will be met at all times.

Two of the 38 successful bids announced by BC Hydro in this last Call will use coal electricity generation, offset by emission-free biomass. Both projects must go through the environmental assessment certification process. I encourage everyone to participate in the upcoming public consultation processes which are integral to the review process.

Coal-fired generation technology has evolved. It is not the technology of the past. B.C.'s air quality guidelines put B.C. at the leading edge of North America for regulating air quality emissions from coal-fired electricity plants. In addition to air quality emission guidelines, thermal projects are required to meet all present and future provincial and federal greenhouse gas regulations.

Inevitably, there will be opponents to any and all kinds of power generation. The reality is we need more electricity. Our government is showing pragmatic leadership through the implementation of our 2002 Energy Plan and the upcoming update in addressing the issue of supplying British Columbians with the electricity they need and expect to run their businesses and enjoy their lives. The issue of energy production and consumption in British Columbia is a

topic which concerns each one of us, challenging us to think about our priorities and decisions on a very complicated issue.