

Exploring the FUTURE

MINING AND MINERAL EXPLORATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mining and electrical power have gone hand in hand since the earliest days of British Columbia's history. The province's first power company, West Kootenay Power and Light, was formed to provide electrical power to mines in the Kootenay region, and British Columbia's first hydroelectric dam, on the Kootenay River, began operation in 1898. Today, hydro electricity makes up more than 90 per cent of the province's electricity, providing dependable power at some of the lowest rates anywhere.

Government's goal is to see the industry opened up to independent power producers to bring more new capacity on line. This will help ensure British Columbians continue to have access to a secure supply of reliable, low-cost electricity and export markets are expanded.

ELECTRICITY

Affordable rates

Around the world, electricity rates range from a low of 2.2 cents US per kilowatt-hour in Iceland to a high of 43 cents per kilowatt-hour in Russia. British Columbia's business rates are clearly at the low end. Light industrial and commercial users pay about 3.6 cents US per kilowatt-hour. Large industrial users pay the equivalent of 2.2 cents US per kilowatt-hour.

Incentives for industry

Electricity rates in British Columbia are set by an independent utilities commission — the British Columbia Utilities Commission — and based on production costs. The province's major suppliers also offer various incentives to business and industrial customers.

For example, BC Hydro (responsible for 90 per cent of utility sales in British Columbia) offers options, such as:

- real-time pricing, which gives large power users access to market prices for incremental energy;

- time-of-use pricing, which encourages the use of power during low-load hours; and,
- price dispatched curtailment in interruptible power rate.

These flexible rate plans can help reduce the cost of doing business in British Columbia.

Major electricity suppliers

BC Hydro is the province's leading energy company, serving approximately 1.4 million customers. UtiliCorp Networks Canada — formerly West Kootenay Power and Light — is the second largest, serving about 125,000 customers in South-central British Columbia. British Columbia also has a number of municipal utilities and industrial power generators.

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