

# Not OK that B.C. imports electric power

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To the editor:

It's environmentally and economically unacceptable that an energy rich province like B.C. is having to import electricity. We need to start tapping into the wealth of run-of-river, wind, biomass and other renewable green energy resources we have right here in this province."

News that BC Hydro will significantly increase its reliance on imported electricity this year may come as a shock to many energy-complacent British Columbians, but not to B.C. Citizens for Green Energy (BCCGE).

BCCGE has been monitoring the electricity import issue for several months now after it became clear that low snowpack accumulation around the province this past winter would lead to low water levels in BC Hydro's hydroelectric reservoirs.

According to BC Hydro's annual reports, last year was the ninth year out of the past 10 years in which BC Hydro has been a net importer of electricity and the situation this year will make it a full 10 years out of 11 in which BC Hydro has had to import electricity to meet customer demand.

The average person in B.C. probably has no idea how critical the situation has become in the last decade. The situation is growing more serious now that the province as a whole has also become a net importer of electricity.

Research by professor George Hoberg of UBC's Department of Forest Resources Management recently delved into the much-debated question of whether B.C. is a net importer or net exporter of electricity by reviewing all of the available technical data. From an objective academic perspective Hoberg determined that B.C., as a whole, is now a two per cent net importer of electricity.

Hoberg presented his analysis at a well-attended panel discussion in June hosted by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions at Vancouver's Sheraton Wall Centre. I and several other BCCGE members were present in the audience of over 250 people as Hoberg indicated in his presentation,

that B.C. can only be seen as a net exporter of electricity if B.C.'s entitlement to electricity generated in the United States under the Columbia River Treaty is added to the export total.

But lumping the American-generated electricity B.C. is entitled to under the Columbia River Treaty, and calling it an export, is misleading and even somewhat disingenuous.

You can't really consider electricity generated in the USA under the Columbia River Treaty to be an electricity export from B.C. And we can't conveniently bring that power into B.C. for our own use because there is no direct transmission line from the Columbia River generating facilities. That's why Powerex has always sold it directly to the American market and generated considerable revenue for the people of this province."

Field says the sales revenue generated by Powerex from B.C.'s Columbia River entitlement is one of the reasons electricity rates in B.C. are so much lower than practically anywhere else in North America.

And even if a transmission line to B.C. from the Columbia River generating plants was constructed, the electricity B.C. would obtain would not be enough to match the growth in our province's population over the next few decades, not to mention the loss of Powerex sales revenue that would cause hydro rates in B.C. to go up accordingly.

It's environmentally and economically unacceptable that an energy-rich province like B.C. is having to import electricity. We need to start tapping into the wealth of run-of-river, wind, biomass and other renewable green energy resources we have right here in this province. They can supplement what BC Hydro generates and allow BC Hydro to replenish its reservoirs so that they're fully charged for when we truly need that power.

The bottom line is that we need more electricity generating infrastructure in this province because climate change and population growth are taking their toll on our province's existing electricity generating infrastructure.

Additional information about green energy issues in B.C. is available on the B.C. Citizens for Green Energy website at [www.greenenergybc.ca](http://www.greenenergybc.ca) and on the BCCGE Livewire Blog.

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