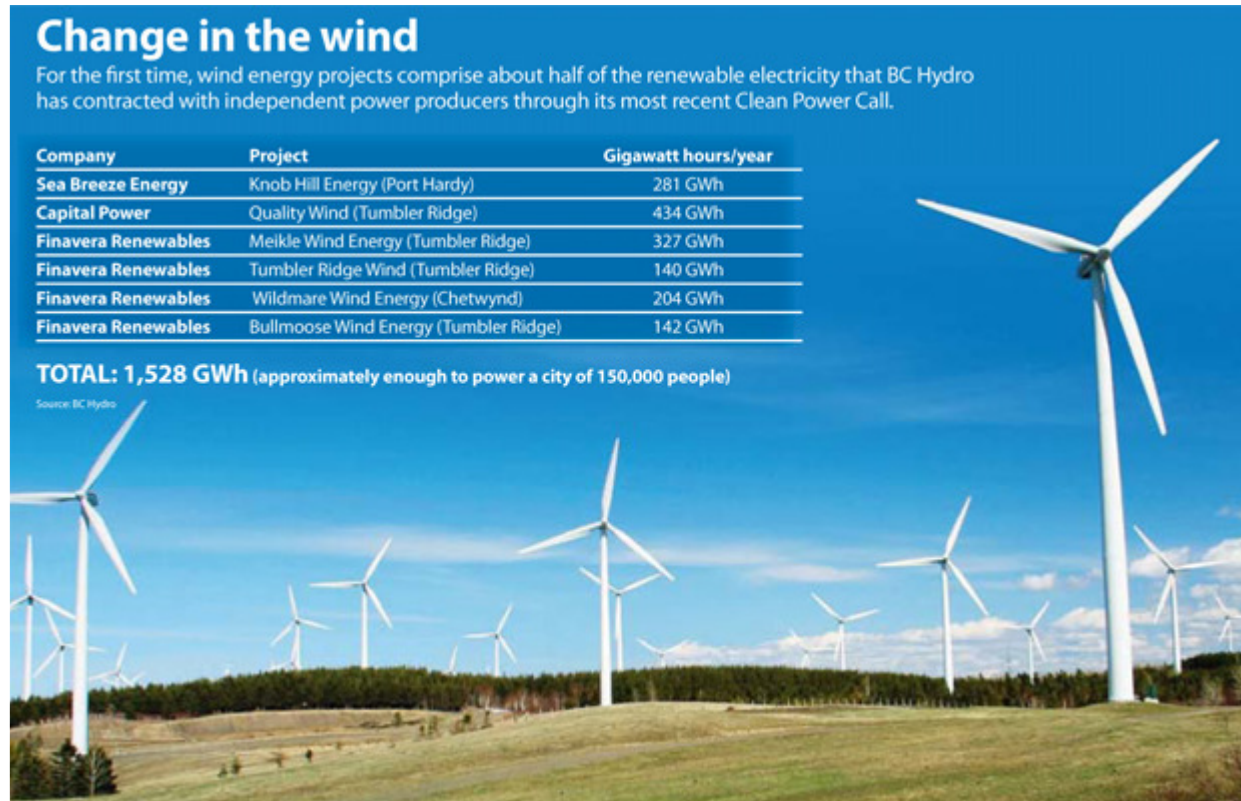


Northern wind power surges in BC Hydro's Clean Power Call

Half of the electricity supply additions come from wind energy

BY SCOTT SIMPSON, [VANCOUVER SUN](#) MAY 11, 2010



Change in the wind: For the first time, wind energy projects comprise about half of the renewable electricity that BC Hydro has contracted with independent power producers through its most recent Clean Power Call.

Photograph by: Graphic, Vancouver Sun

Wind energy accounts for about half the new electricity supply contracted by BC Hydro in the 2008 Clean Power Call, which is finally close to completion.

Most of the wind projects are clustered in northeast B.C., particularly around Tumbler Ridge, and there is one on the east coast of Vancouver Island at Port Hardy.

Paul Manson, president and CEO of Sea Breeze Energy, said his company's only complaint was the length of time the process took.

Sea Breeze's Knob Hill wind project near Port Hardy was approved by B.C.'s environmental assessment office in 2003, Manson noted in an interview. Knob Hill is a minimum 99-megawatt wind farm with an estimated cost of \$300 million.

Independent power producers have one operational wind farm in B.C., where hydroelectric resources have dominated for more than a century, another under construction and a third in development.

Wind projects have faced substantially less opposition from environmental groups — and other jurisdictions such as California have identified wind power as preferable to hydro as a premium-priced electricity import "product."

"Generally, wind has the potential to offer far more renewable energy with far less impact than most other types of renewables in this province right now," Manson said. "In my opinion, it's very prudent for us to be diversifying our energy sources."

A total of 24 projects have been offered energy purchase agreements and Hydro is in late-stage negotiations with proponents of two others.

Absent from the final list of successful projects are the large, high-profile renewable power proposals — Bute Inlet, Klinaklini and NaiKun — that had been targeted by environmental groups and other critics as evidence that the government was preparing to over-build B.C.'s electricity resources and stick Hydro ratepayers with the tab.

Instead, the winners' list is dominated by medium-sized wind energy projects and small- to medium-sized run-of-river hydro projects. The total volume of power is roughly 3,000 gigawatt hours per year out of a potential pool of 17,000 gigawatt hours that was bid into the process in 2008.

Energy-sector commentator David Austin noted that Hydro had announced it was seeking as much as 5,000 gigawatt hours of power and wondered if attrition among successful bidders — which plagued Hydro in previous energy calls — could again become a factor. "The total amount of energy acquired under the Clean Power Call is far short of the amount needed in the next six years, and inevitably is going to lead to another clean-power call," Austin said.

Independent power producers may have to wait two years to find out if Hydro plans another call — that's when Hydro is expected to release its next set of projections for future B.C. electricity demand.

The provincial government has ordered Hydro to shed its status as a net importer of electricity by 2016, and the Crown corporation is using a mix of independent power, conservation programs, and hydro-generation system upgrades to hit that target — barring any unanticipated demand surge such as a substantial consumer shift to electric vehicles.

"I don't think at this point we need to make any additional moves, other than what is on the books right now, to get to self-sufficiency and beyond," said Cam Matheson, Hydro's acting vice-president of customer care and conservation.

"One of the big things on the demand side we need to watch is the development of the carbon economy in B.C. By that I mean [developments] where the electricity system will be used to take up industry or transportation sectors that are reducing their carbon footprint, and will certainly have to have a fair amount of their economic development taken up by the electricity system."

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