

Penticton, BC – Media Release

For Immediate Release: March 11, 2024
Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce

BC UTILITIES COMMISSION NEEDS TO REVERSE DECISION ON TWINNING NATURAL GAS PIPELINE

The Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce has asked the British Columbia Utilities Commission to reverse its previous decision and allow an existing 30-kilometre stretch of pipeline carrying natural gas be twinned in order to increase capacity.

“The Utilities Commission’s confirmed that a capacity shortfall of carrying natural gas to Okanagan homes and businesses was imminent, but denied the Okanagan Capacity Upgrade project because it felt that natural gas usage would flatten or potentially decline as a result of the province’s commitments in the CleanBC Roadmap, the changes to the BC Energy Step Code and the Zero Carbon Step Code,” Chamber President Nicole Clark quotes from the Commission’s written decision.

The roadmap includes transitioning away from fossil fuels and into clean, renewable energy like hydro-generated electricity for home and commercial heating via heat pumps. On the surface, it’s a reasonable direction, but back on January 10th, the Energy Futures Initiative informed British Columbians the province was forced to import 20% of its electricity in 2023 due to 18 months of drought. That translates into not one but two Site C dam’s worth of electricity, so even with Site C coming online within the next year, the province is still short and that doesn’t account for increases in population, electric-vehicle use, or future drought conditions.

Potentially adding to B.C.’s electrical shortage is the provincial government’s recent support of hydrogen production.

“While the Chamber also supports this initiative, a hydrogen facility that’s being proposed for Prince George would require 800 megawatts of electricity. To put that into perspective, the Site C dam is expected to produce 1,100 megawatts, so the question becomes how are we going to generate enough electricity to meet all of these needs?” asks Michael Magnusson, the Chamber’s Executive Director.

Electricity that was imported last year came mainly from the United States. 60% of American electricity is generated from coal, crude oil, and ironically, natural gas, which directly contradicts the CleanBC initiative.

“The Chamber understands the need to transition away from fossil fuels into cleaner, renewable energy sources, but until we can reliably produce enough electricity in the province to meet all of B.C.’s needs, it only makes sense to have a balanced and diversified energy network, especially when we’re talking about home and business heating,” concludes the Chamber.

While this project was supported by the Penticton Indian Band and Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen, it was denied by an unelected, two-member panel at the B.C. Utilities Commission. The Chamber has asked both the CEO of BCUC and B.C.'s Minister of Energy to reverse this decision based on a disregard for British Columbia's current and future renewable energy limitations.

###

For more information, contact:

Michael Magnusson, Executive Director
Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce
mmagnusson@penticton.org

Nicole Clark, President
Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce
nclark@cfokanagan.com

The Penticton & Wine Country Chamber of Commerce is a dynamic, trusted and respected business authority representing approximately 500 local business and non-profit members that drive economic and social growth and improvement on behalf of, and in support of our members and the community.