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Marie-France Therrien
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

February 18, 2009

Re: Bute Inlet Hydroelectric Project

Dear Ms. Therrien,

On behalf of Sierra Club BC, I am writing to express my concerns regarding Plutonic Power Inc.'s proposed hydroelectric project in Bute Inlet. The massive scale and long-term environmental impacts of this development proposal warrant the most thorough and transparent public and scientific scrutiny. The short-term and long-term social and economic effects must also be carefully considered. We are requesting that the Federal government **refer the Bute Inlet project to a Federal Review Panel and public hearings.**

Sierra Club BC believes that before developing new sources of energy, BC must establish a comprehensive energy strategy that prioritizes reducing demand through conservation. If the provincial energy strategy determines that new energy is required beyond the capability for demand side management, BC must establish provincial siting guidelines and a more rigorous environmental assessment process for proposed IPPs. A meaningful environmental assessment process would consider the cumulative impact of multiple projects across the landscape, assess impacts to species at risk, protect wilderness and terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, and incorporate ongoing monitoring of impacts to ecological values. Will the cumulative impacts of all run-of-river projects in the area, along with the impacts of forestry, be considered in the Bute Inlet proposal's environmental assessment?

The proposed hydroelectric project in Bute Inlet is located within a biologically diverse area that is home to eagles, bears and critical salmon bearing streams. Bute Inlet contains habitat for mountain goats, marbled murrelets, peregrine falcons, harlequin ducks and grizzly bears, as well as other endangered animals and plants. The Bute watershed is home to 23 varieties of fish, including all 5 major types of Pacific salmon. Displacement and mortality of these populations, along with other significant wildlife impacts related to reduced water flow and construction activities are major concerns if this large project is allowed to proceed. It is important that the environmental review process undertakes scientific studies that are comprehensive, impartial and peer-reviewed.

The area is also an important economic and recreation area for those living in many regions distant from Bute Inlet, including Victoria. It is important that the environmental assessment of the proposed project assess the potential impacts on the tourism, commercial and sport fishing, guiding, and timber industries.

Sierra Club BC believes the magnitude of the proposed project will have a direct and indirect impact to citizens across the province. There is an immediate need to extend the public review period to offer more realistic opportunities for public involvement, and to hold open houses in Victoria and Vancouver to allow interested stakeholders to comment on the Draft Terms of Reference.

Where new energy is required, Sierra Club BC supports low-impact, green, renewable energy projects on an individual basis. When property sited, with attention paid to location and ecological footprint size, these projects can create clean renewable energy. A thorough environmental assessment process, that includes an assessment of cumulative impacts, is required before any new developments proceed.

Should you wish to further discuss this issue, inquiries may be directed to myself via email or phone, listed below.

Sincerely,

Susan Howatt
Acting Executive Director
Sierra Club BC

250.386.5255 ext.239

cc. Premier Gordon Campbell
Kathy Eichenberger, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
Barry Penner, Minister of Environment