



Bute Inlet Hydro Project to have public hearings if project revived, says Ottawa

Minister Kent says Federal Review Panel to be re-appointed for environmental assessment of major project

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VANCOUVER – Canada’s Environment Minister, Peter Kent, confirmed Thursday that the stalled Bute Inlet Hydroelectric Project will remain subject to Canada’s highest level of environmental assessment.

Plutonic Power and General Electric, partners in the mega private “green” power development, have shelved immediate plans but continue to claim Bute Inlet is in their sights.

Friends of Bute Inlet and West Coast Environmental Law are concerned about downgrades to environmental assessment processes, and had recently appealed to the minister to ensure that the Federal Review panel appointed for Bute Inlet would continue. On Friday, the federal government responded positively to the groups' request.

Although the current Review Panel has been disbanded, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency issued a statement confirming the Minister of Environment will appoint a new Panel, should the Bute project proceed at a later date.

“We’re happy that Minister Kent has done the right thing and made sure that if this massive hydro project comes back, it will get the strongest possible environmental assessment available under the law,” said Josh Paterson, Staff Lawyer at West Coast Environmental Law, which assisted the Friends of Bute Inlet in advocating for the federal review panel to be maintained. “This project has huge potential impacts and its wider, cumulative effects on the whole region need to be studied.”

“We’re delighted that there can be commendable decisions in Ottawa!” says Lannie Keller, spokesperson for Friends of Bute Inlet. “Friends of Bute Inlet is cautiously optimistic that even if the companies are indifferent to public outrage, Plutonic and GE have recognized that the development and environmental costs at Bute Inlet will not warrant pushing the project into an environmental assessment.”

Access to capital was one motivation for Plutonic Power’s plans to merge with Magma Energy forming Alterra Energy Corp. Plutonic and GE face operational challenges at their Toba-Montrose hydroelectric project and cost-benefit challenges with the proposed “Upper Toba Valley” project, but nothing compares to their mega-challenge at Bute Inlet.

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