

OUR POSITION on the ELECTION and STATUS REPORT ON BIG WHITE WATER APPLICATION: MAY 2009

- ◆ Given the following and the Campbell Government's:
- ◆ well established commitment to moving public assets into private hands,
- ◆ a policy of encouraging Independent Power Projects without having any effective overall planning in place for these or other energy sources,
- ◆ continued weakening of environmental assessments
- ◆ imposition of Bill 30 to effectively remove any local government control over projects favoured by the Provincial Government
- ◆ creating a mindset in a variety of Ministries that the Ministries are there to serve the interests of promoters, resource users and other extractive "shareholders" instead of being the careful custodians of **public-assets** (as the Ministries invariably claim to be)
- ◆ failure to protect endangered species
- ◆ expanded salmon farming, & denigrated critics despite evidence of damage to wild stocks
- ◆ silenced, sidelined or constructively dismissed scientists within Government who expressed concerns about projects favoured by Gov't

WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT A VOTE FOR THE CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT will be harmful to the Kettle River and the Environment.

BIG WHITE STATUS:

- A. Ministry of Environment has now passed off this application to the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Arts where they indicate that "public consultation" on the application will now take place as part of a new Master Plan submission by Big White. The "public consultation" process is a sham as our later comments will show.
- B. The Big White expansion plan calls for massive expansion of the Resort, two golf courses, intrusion into an Ecological Reserve and perhaps a 414% or more expansion of existing bed units MOE has declined invitations to state the Ministry's position at any public meeting or forum and the Minister and the Ministry have responded to public and media concerns with misleading and contradictory statements.
- C. MOE has just indicated that they will not be funding/participating in a proposed study of the Kettle River Basin, which study would have been an integral part of a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, recently proposed by the Regional District who were expecting to partner with MOE on the study.
- D. Despite assurances by Premier Campbell in Nov 2008, of: "community consultation.... environmental review....community use review....thorough and complete community and scientific studies," it is apparent that these were misleading and meaningless promises, as the present and future processes make a mockery of the Campbell claims. (see raw interview at <http://www.youtube.com/user/SavetheKettle>)

Re A: The MOE handover of the process to MTCA puts the process in the hands of the Ministry that invited Big White and other resorts to "apply for all the water". MTCA as is apparent in their letters

inviting resorts to apply, see themselves as agents on behalf of their clients, (resorts) not as stewards of public resources. (See the letters on pdf following Premier Campbell's "assurances"

http://www.boundaryalliance.org/cambell_sassurances.pdf

Re B: MTCA's review of Big White's proposed new Master Plan will not trigger any mandated Environmental Assessment, will hold no public meetings except for a requirement that Big White hold an "open-house" to present the plan to the public. It is not usual or expected that any Government agents would attend this open house. See notes on Big White's expansion plan

http://www.boundaryalliance.org/bigwhiteplan_notesmar09.pdf

Re C: MOE and the Minister have repeatedly stated that Big White's proposed withdrawals would have an insignificant effect on the Kettle, only .2% effect on the freshet at Midway. **There is no measuring station at Midway** and the claim is made on the basis of measurements taken by USGS downstream and across the border at Ferry Washington after yet another stream enters the Kettle downstream from Midway. The .2% at freshet at "Midway" is a red-herring. If 100% of the flow of the three streams being proposed for extractions was removed, it would still be characterized as "insignificant" during the freshet at Midway. The question that is not being answered (and we suggest there is insufficient data to answer it) is what effect the proposed withdrawals would have on the three streams and what effect this would have on groundwater recharge on which the Kettle depends for summer and late season flows. While MOE prefers to use the .2% at Midway figure there has been brief mention of the withdrawals amounting to 9% of the freshet of the three streams. Due to the lack of stream flow recorders, hydrology info on groundwater intake and storage, all such calculations are uninformed guesswork, as is any calculation of the increase in actual percentage taken in future years when existing warming trends are predicted to result in lower snowpacks and reduced streamflows. MOE has variously indicated that evaporation losses in storage and use are minor, that water withdrawn will return to groundwater, suggesting a scenario of nearly no net loss. If this notion was proposed on all or most existing licences we would see it for the absurdity it is. The Minister also suggested that despite the "insignificance" of the withdrawals some relief from flooding might occur on the Kettle which is "prone to flooding". Apart from the fact that the Kettle is not "prone to flooding" one might expect that such self serving, contradictory observations might be expressed by a proponent, not by Government. We can not rely on the Government to provide decisions based on sound science, instead we see and can expect that they will try any specious justifications in order to give away public resources.

The misleading suggestion of "no net loss" falls apart under examination. Big White has stated, contrary to their initial application, that this water is for future snowmaking and golf-course irrigation.

In storage, 20% to 30% losses can be expected from shallow reservoirs due to evaporation. In snowmaking a further 10% to 20% can be lost to evaporation and sublimation. Irrigation of golf-courses can result in 100% loss to evaporation and transpiration. Of the portion used for snowmaking that remains, water quality and environmental consequences need review based on studies in Eastern Canada and Europe that show environmental damage. MOE Water Branch and MTCA do not consider this part of their mandate. Who does? The lifts required to move this water into reservoirs and then snowmaking will require huge energy/fuel inputs that have additional environmental consequences.

The water extraction proposed comes at a time when the Government's own studies indicate that existing warming trends will result in diminished river flows due to lower precipitation and snowpacks. Higher temperatures create higher evaporation rates and dry out soils. The Ministry of Agriculture has estimated that 30% more water will be required to grow existing volumes of product within 30 years. Increasing rates of soil dryout can, according to the Government's own studies, mean that up to 30% of precipitation and snow melt can be absorbed by dry soils before water finds its way into groundwater or run-off.

That the Ministry of Environment and MTCA would consider approving these withdrawals given future agricultural and public needs and the lack of scientific data on the consequences of such withdrawals now or in the face of predicted future trends, indicates that their priorities are not in the public interest.

WE SUPPORT STV

Our existing first past the post system has repeatedly seen elections in which one party with 40% of the vote gets 100% of the power for four years leaving 60% disenfranchised, votes wasted. While both established parties are mostly against STV, STV gives more choice to voters making elected dictatorships unlikely. These changing dictatorships have usually resulted in unsettling turmoil while parties seek to destroy or disband processes or practices initiated by a previous regime.