

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting British Columbia's
Community Water Supply Sources

Email – info@bctwa.org

Website – www.bctwa.org



January 26, 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

CAMPBELL GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO KEEP ‘GREEN’ ENERGY TASK FORCE SUBMISSIONS SECRET

In response to a letter to the BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resource’s Project Coordinator for the Green Energy Advisory Task Force late last week, the Tap Water Alliance was informed on January 25, 2010 by Katherine Rowe that the government will allow all the recent public submissions to the Task Force groups (November 30 - December 31, 2009) to be kept secret. After personally consulting with the four Task Force Chairs as requested by the Alliance, Rowe stated “the public submissions are not going to get released.” Unfortunately, repeated questions to Rowe about the BC government’s “domain” and “interest” in the public submissions were deflected and left unanswered.

In December, 2009, after Energy Minister Lekstrom named the appointed 29 Task Force members, information was released in the media criticizing the lack of transparency and public accountability of the Task Force, and how just under half the members, through direct or indirect private company affiliation, had made small and large political financial contributions to the BC Liberals, many key players in the Energy sector. A suggestion was made that these apparent conflicts of interest be investigated by BC’s Auditor General.

In response to the public outcry, on January 11, 2010, about 200 people attended a public dialogue forum in downtown Vancouver, hosted by West Coast Environmental Law Foundation. They participated with a 17-member panel on the general questions of Energy policy and projects under review by the Task Force members and the main BC Cabinet Task Force committee. The dialogue participants raised concerns on the lack of public disclosure, absence of public participation in land use planning, in particular Bill 30 (passed in March, 2006) which restrains local governments from Run-of-River hydro development proposals, the (“by design”) removal of environmental regulations, the question of exporting electrical energy without open public debate, and the secrecy and unaccountability of the Task Force groups, themes repeatedly discussed.

“This is yet another sad day for our democracy in BC. Deals are being made behind closed doors that will seal the further fate of our rivers, line the pockets of energy developers and raise the price of energy for BC consumers”, said Will Koop, Alliance Coordinator. “We call upon our government through Energy Minister Lekstrom to immediately suspend the release of his pending report and conduct a proper, Public Hearing process on the future of our rivers.”

Similar concerns by the American public over secrecy with the Bush Administration’s National Energy Policy Development Group erupted in 2001 (the same year the BC Liberals began a review of a new controversial Energy Plan). According to information on the U.S. Judicial Watch website (*Judicial Watch, Inc. vs. National Energy Policy Development Group, et al.*), former vice president Cheney’s Energy Task Force “refused to turn over information pertaining to who was involved and what was discussed”, “in violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or the open meetings law, as it is better known.” After four years of court proceedings, and nine years later, information about the energy industry meetings is still kept secret - for now.

The Alliance is in the process of filing an access to information request to force the release of the Task Force submissions.

For information: Will Koop (email, info@bctwa.org). For Green Energy Advisory Task Force member backgrounders, and YouTube videos of the public dialogue forum: (www.action.saveourrivers.ca/)