

Turning off the Tap: Site C and Water Privatization in Canada

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Site C Dam is a proposed 60-metre high, 1,050m length dam on the Peace River on Treaty 8 territory in northeastern British Columbia (see image below), a project that if built, would create an 83km reservoir submerging 78 First Nations heritage sites in violation of the Constitution Act, but how does it connect to continental water diversion?

To date, much has been said in the media regarding the issue of Site C Dam, but very little has touched on the matter of NAFTA and water.



Peace River BC

The spin behind the necessity of the project has largely concentrated on exaggerated claims of the energy needs of Vancouver, to the BC Liberals' power requirements for the LNG and Fracking industry, to providing below-market value energy to Alberta in exchange for agreeing to their pipelines. Recently, the Justin Trudeau Government approved two additional permits for Site C Dam despite recommendations against the project by the Royal Society of Canada and 250 of Canada's top scientists on the basis that Site C Dam is an ecological catastrophe and gross violation of rights under the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights and violates our own Constitution.

Little, however, has been noted by the media about the NAWAPA (North America Water Power Alliance) connection to Site C Dam, and that is something all Canadians should be seriously concerned about.

NAWAPA is a continental water diversion plan drafted by the US Army Corps of Engineers during the 1950s -1960s. Essentially the plan involved diverting (stealing) water from Canada via the Rocky Mountain Trench to Southern California. The rivers of Canada in British Columbia and the Yukon were an integral part of this plan.

In 1964 Parsons Company published a paper called NAWAPA: "North American Water and Power Alliance," by Roland P. Kelly, Technical Program manager of "The Ralph M. Parsons Company". Essentially the paper estimates that NAWAPA could provide water supply to the continent (i.e) The United States for 100 years. In the proposal, the project would divert approximately 69,000,000 acre-ft to the United States Annually. In *Water and Free Trade: The Mulroney Government's Agenda for Canada's Most Precious Resource*, agrologist Wendy Holm discusses the core aspects:

" The NAWAPA plan proposed by Ralph Parsons Co. of Los Angeles envisaged building a large number of the worlds biggest dams to trap the Yukon, Peace and Liard Rivers into a reservoir that would flood one-tenth of British Columbia to create a canal from Alaska to Washington State that would supply water through existing canals and pipelines to most areas of the continent.."(31)

Roland P. Kelly argues

"Since the water resources of the continent were placed by nature without regard to political boundaries, it seems logical...to figure out a distribution system maximizing these resources without regard to these boundaries"(31).

Obviously, the implications of this project would have devastating environmental and human impacts, in addition the destruction of eco-systems and diversion of water would serve as an accelerant to climate change.

With regard to the Site C Dam, it is worth noting that the proposed dam site falls directly on the lines drawn in the original NAWAPA plans. Site C and the Columbia River Project are integral to the implementation of NAWAPA, thus calling into question the nature of the project in relationship to continental water diversion plans.

It is of the utmost importance to note that, once impounded behind the dam, the Peace River **is subject to NAFTA as a water commodity**, thus putting the people of Canada at risk of loosing water rights if privatization of BC Hydro occurs. One might reasonably question BC Hydro's managed fiscal state of '\$18.1 billion in approximate debt' as being a primer for manufactured privatization to occur. The only potentially saving factor in the political manoeuvring behind Site C and Continental Water Sharing is the fact that the Province of British Columbia is located on un-ceded territory. The Governments' title to water is, therefore, invalid and any quiet agreements made by our politicians with regard to NAWAPA would not be recognized under International Law despite corporate interests involved.

The law must be the personal concern of every citizen, to uphold for our neighbours as well as for ourselves. What does it say if the Government of Canada is found in violation of section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and recently the violation of the Wildlife Act? It is time for people to start asking questions, who is benefitting from this project and what is going on behind the scenes?

<http://www.wrri.nmsu.edu/publications/watcon/proc11/Kelly.pdf>

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