

March 15, 2024

File No. 1-70-23

Hon. Brenda Bailey  
Minister of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation  
Room 134 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

*Sent via email: JEDI.Minister@gov.bc.ca*

Dear Minister Bailey:

**Re:** Appeal to Support Continued Operation of Atlantic Power

We are writing to you as the Minister of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation, recognizing your pivotal role in supporting and maintaining the strong and diverse economy that British Columbians need for long-term prosperity.

Our community faces a significant challenge with the potential closure of Atlantic Power's Williams Lake Power Plant, a 66 MW biomass-fired facility that has been integral to our region since it began construction in 1991. Recent developments have brought forth serious threats to its continued operation, and we seek your assistance in addressing this pressing issue.

The Williams Lake Power Plant is on the verge of shutdown in January 2025 unless it secures a more readily available and economical fibre supply or attains a more favourable power purchase agreement rate from BC Hydro. The evolving dynamics in electricity prices, fibre availability, and economic challenges exacerbated by the pandemic have contributed to this precarious situation.

This facility, supporting highly integrated supply chains between pulp and paper, lumber, and panel mills, is the largest single taxpayer in the City of Williams Lake, contributing approximately \$1.7 million in property taxes and water fees. It sustains 29 well-paid direct jobs, many who are members of USW Local 1-2017, with an annual payroll of approximately \$4.5 million. Additionally, it generates 100 indirect jobs locally, playing a vital role in a community with a population of approximately 10,600.

The Williams Lake Power Plant is not only an economic cornerstone but also provides crucial environmental benefits. By transforming waste wood into a commodity, it enhances competitiveness, prevents landfilling or open-air burning of unmerchantable wood, and significantly mitigates local forest fire risks, fostering a healthier environment for natural regeneration.

Biomass, as utilized by the Williams Lake Power Plant, is considered a renewable energy source, aligning with the *Clean Energy Act's* objective to generate at least 93% of electricity in British Columbia from clean or renewable resources.

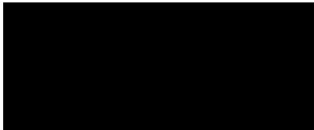
The potential closure of the Williams Lake Power Plant would not only impact the local economy and employment opportunities but also pose challenges for local mills looking to dispose of unmerchantable wood. By transforming this waste wood into energy, the Williams Lake Power Plant supports the forestry industry by providing a market for materials that might not have significant value otherwise.

We are also reaching out to the Minister of Forests, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, asking for their support in helping us find a solution to keep this vital plant operational. Options include securing a stable and cost-effective fibre supply and amendments to the power purchase agreement. We eagerly anticipate any suggestions that you might have as well. Your intervention will be crucial in preserving the Williams Lake Power Plant as a vital contributor to our community, the forestry industry, and the broader economic objectives of the Province.

We respectfully invite you and your colleagues to visit Williams Lake for a comprehensive tour of the biomass facility. Please contact Kim Dressler, Manager of Administrative Services, at [kdressler@williamslake.ca](mailto:kdressler@williamslake.ca) or 250.392.1775 to make arrangements.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your assistance in safeguarding the Williams Lake Power Plant and its role in our community's economic and environmental well-being.

Sincerely,



Mayor Surinderpal Rathor

- c: Premier David Eby  
MLA Lorne Doerkson, Cariboo Chilcotin  
Chief Willie Sellars and Council, Williams Lake First Nation  
Chief Rhonda Phillips and Council, Xat'sull First Nation  
Chair Joe Alphonse, Chiefs and Council, Tsilhqot'in National Government  
Chair Margo Wagner and Directors, Cariboo Regional District  
President Paul French and Directors, Williams Lake Chamber of Commerce