

March 15, 2024

File No. 1-70-23

Hon. Bruce Ralston, KC
Minister of Forests
Room 138 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Sent via email: FOR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Ralston:

Re: Appeal to Support Continued Operation of Atlantic Power

We are writing to you to bring to your attention our profound concerns regarding the potential closure of Atlantic Power's Williams Lake Power Plant. This 66 MW biomass-fired power facility has been an integral part of our community since it began construction in 1991, and recent developments have raised serious threats to its continued operation.

We know that you will remember that the Williams Lake Power Plant was originally instituted to improve air quality in Williams Lake by providing a clean energy source that uses wood waste, instead of the former waste removal methods (including beehive burners and slash piles) that are very ecologically damaging.

The Williams Lake Power Plant is facing an imminent 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. This situation has been influenced by changing dynamics in electricity prices, fibre availability, and economic challenges exacerbated by the pandemic since the last Energy Purchase Agreement was signed in 2019, and we are sure that you would agree there have been significant economic changes since then.

We recognize your pivotal role in supporting a sustainable and competitive future for BC's forest sector while safeguarding our environment and communities. We humbly seek your assistance in ensuring the continued operation of this vital facility.

The benefits of the Williams Lake Power Plant extend far beyond the immediate community. It plays a crucial role in the BC Interior forestry industry and the economic cluster of mills and loggers in the Cariboo region. By transforming waste wood into a commodity, the plant enhances competitiveness and provides employment opportunities. The potential closure puts numerous forestry jobs at risk, including those in logging operations, trucking, mills, and various local spin-off jobs.

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In addition to its economic contributions, the Williams Lake Power Plant provides essential environmental advantages. It prevents the landfilling or open-air burning of unmerchantable wood, significantly mitigating local forest fire risks and promoting a healthier environment for natural forest regeneration. The plant converts wood waste into carbon-free energy, and its ash byproduct serves as a natural and effective fertilizer for area farmers at no cost.

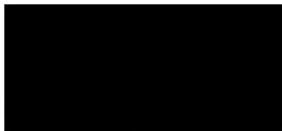
Biomass, as utilized by the Williams Lake Power Plant, is considered a renewable energy source, aligning with the *Clean Energy Act* objective to generate at least 93% of electricity in British Columbia from clean or renewable resources. The potential closure would not only impact the local economy and employment opportunities but also pose challenges for local mills looking to dispose of unmerchantable wood. Therefore, we urge your support in exploring solutions to secure a stable and cost-effective fibre supply or supporting amendments to the power purchase agreement under which the plant operates.

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 or 250.392.1775 to make arrangements.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your assistance in preserving the Williams Lake Power Plant as a vital contributor to our community, the forestry industry, and the broader environmental objectives of the province.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your thoughtful consideration and positive intervention.

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