February 11, 2016

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Fax: 613-941-6900

Open Letter

There's nothing clean about the Site C dam: Canadian organizations condemn Peace River hydroelectric mega-project for human rights violations

Dear Prime Minister,

Our organizations are profoundly concerned that construction of the Site C dam is being pushed ahead despite the conclusion of a joint federal-provincial environmental assessment that it would severely and permanently undermine Indigenous peoples' use of the land; harm rare plants and other biodiversity; make fishing unsafe for at least a generation; and submerge burial grounds and other crucial cultural and historical sites.

The Site C dam is not just another resource development project. It is one of the largest such projects currently underway in Canada. For First Nations such as West Moberly and Prophet River, which continue to challenge the project in court, flooding the Peace Valley would take away one of the last remaining places where they can still practice their cultures and traditions. In other words, it would violate fundamental rights protected by Treaty 8, the Canadian Constitution, and international human rights law.

When the federal and provincial governments approved the project, they claimed that the severe harm that would be caused by Site C was 'justified' by the energy and the jobs it will produce. We strongly disagree.

Ignoring the rights of Indigenous peoples can never be justified. Furthermore, in this day and age there are far less damaging and less costly methods that could be used to meet British Columbia's energy needs - many of which would create more jobs than Site C.

Canada recently played a crucial role in achieving an historic global accord on climate change. The Paris Agreement calls on governments to increase the use of renewable energy but also reaffirmed the obligation of all governments to acknowledge and respect human rights, including the rights of Indigenous peoples.

In other words, energy projects that violate human rights are not clean or green.

Prime Minister, we urge you and your Cabinet to put the principles you championed in Paris into practice in Canada. We urge that construction of the Site C dam be halted immediately, that all permits be rescinded, and that the previous government's approval of this project be re-examined. It is crucial that the federal and provincial governments work collaboratively with the Indigenous peoples of the region to reach common agreement on a long-term plan to protect Indigenous land use in the Peace Valley.

The people of Treaty 8 have said no to Site C. Any government that is truly committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, to respecting human rights, and to promoting truly clean energy must listen.

Signed,

Alliance 4 Democracy
The Anglican Eco-Justice Unit, Diocese of New Westminster
Amnesty International Canada
Blue Planet Project
BC Women's Institute
Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion - BROKE
Canadian Federation of Students
Canadian Friends Service Committee
Council of Canadians
Christian Peacemakers Team, Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Project
Coalition of Progressive Electors (COPE) Vancouver
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society CPAWS-BC

David Suzuki Foundation
Earthroots
Ecojustice
Greenpeace Canada
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Patagonia
Peace Valley Environment Association
Peace Valley Landowner Association
RAVEN (Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs)
Skeena Wild Conservation Trust
Sierra Club BC
West Coast Environmental Law
Wilderness Committee
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Cc:

The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

The Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

The Honourable Hunter Tootoo
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard