

WORKER ACCOMMODATION

Stage 3 of the Site C Clean Energy Project (Site C) is the environmental and regulatory review phase. As part of an environmental assessment of Site C, BC Hydro will identify and assess potential project effects — environmental, economic, social, heritage and health — and opportunities to provide lasting benefits for the region and First Nations. Where effects cannot be avoided, BC Hydro will identify and evaluate options for mitigation.

This study update provides an overview of work completed to date and currently underway and is current as of fall 2011. Studies may be changed or revised in scope or timing on the basis of input from regulators, government agencies, First Nations, stakeholders and the public as part of the pre-application stage of the environmental assessment process.

The Site C project requires environmental certification and other regulatory permits and approvals before it can proceed to construction. In addition, the Crown has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Aboriginal groups.

DEFINITION

Worker accommodation describes the housing and services required to support workers during the construction of the proposed Site C project. The worker accommodation options may include a combination of temporary camps, RV parks and in-community housing.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the worker accommodation study is to develop a plan for the provision of safe and cost-effective accommodation options to support Site C's project construction phase, while considering the interaction of the workforce on nearby communities.

A key consideration is to retain flexibility in the provision of worker accommodations to be able to adapt to labour and market conditions that will occur during the project's construction period. Annual monitoring of the labour and housing market will be required to understand and adapt to project requirements.

STATUS OF STUDIES

Preliminary Construction Labour Requirements

The Site C project is estimated to create approximately 7,000 person-years of direct construction employment through the approximately seven year construction period. Approximately 90 per cent of the construction labour requirements are for work at the dam site. Work is required on both the south and north sides of the Peace River with limited transportation through the dam site construction area due to safety and efficiency considerations. This means that providing accommodations for the workforce is required on both sides of the river during dam site construction.

Construction areas away from the dam site include work on Highway 29 realignment, other road works, forestry clearing, quarry work, construction material transport, and transmission line construction. Worker accommodations near these areas may also be required.

The labour force will have seasonal and annual peaking characteristics matching the construction schedule. The peak workforce is estimated to be 1,700 workers in year six of construction. Shift schedules and rotations will be considered in accommodation requirements and options. Analysis of the workforce requirements will consider the potential for local and regional workers, workers who opt to move to the region, and commuting considerations.

These workforce requirements are based on preliminary construction planning and assumptions. These assumptions may be updated over the course of Stage 3 as the project is further defined. Labour requirements and schedules may also be updated depending on final design and procurement, including contractor preferences, methods, and costing considerations.

Consultation

Worker housing was a public consultation topic during Stage 2 consultation in May/June 2008.

- Participants were asked about the importance of five factors when it comes to housing out-of-town workers. Two factors were judged to be of higher importance: minimizing impact on local housing costs and minimizing the need for additional services. Participants ranked creating opportunities for out-of-town workers to bring their families to the Peace region as slightly lower in importance. Less than half of participants believe it is “extremely” or “very” important to minimize the cost of the project by having employees live on-site or to provide recreation opportunities for the workers.
- As part of the public consultation conducted in Stage 2, concerns were raised regarding the Site C workforce putting pressure on local infrastructure — such as health care, recreation facilities, schools and policing — without providing any benefits to municipalities. Other stakeholders expressed concern about the short-term nature of the worker housing requirements and its potential impact on the local housing market and local services.

This consultation input is being considered, along with financial and technical input, as the Site C project moves forward through the regulatory review stage and refines project plans. Additional consultation is continuing with local and regional governments as part of project planning.

Stage 3 Work

As part of a Site C Socio-Economic Assessment, a worker accommodation study will include identifying the project’s requirements for accommodating workers, associated aspects such as workforce transport, and consideration of regional housing market conditions and current practices for accommodating construction workforces.

Baseline socio-economic data gathering is underway, and will include specific analysis of worker housing, population, and demographics. Information on waste and water facilities, transportation, and recreation infrastructure is also being collected, and will be used in the analysis of options for accommodating workers.

Input has been requested from local and regional governments on initial concepts and criteria for worker housing, including location, size, schedule, safety, demographics, transportation, infrastructure, community services, and potential long term infrastructure and decommissioning.

Worker Accommodation Options

Temporary Worker Accommodations at the Dam Site

The majority of workers constructing the dam and generating facilities would be accommodated at on-site camps near the dam site construction area. A north bank and south bank camp are planned to provide safe and efficient access to the work sites. Preliminary estimates are for an initial 500 peak capacity camp on the north bank, followed by a 1,000 to 1,200 peak capacity camp on the south bank. Camps would be installed in phases to meet the peak workforce needs, and demobilized as capacity requirements decline near the end of construction.

Typically built from pre-fabricated modular units, the construction camps would operate as self-contained villages, including private sleeping quarters, laundry, kitchen and dining areas, first aid facilities, and recreation, fitness and leisure facilities.

Temporary Regional Work Site Accommodations

For the workforce not employed at the dam site, temporary regional camps are proposed at two general, central locations, along the upper Jackfish Lake Road and along Highway 29 in the vicinity of the Halfway River and Farrell Creek area. Specific sites for these temporary camps have not yet been identified. The size and duration of each camp would be determined by detailed project scheduling for work in these areas.

For planning purposes the estimated camp capacity for each regional site would be up to 150 workers. Accommodation in these areas may also include RV Park spaces in addition to pre-fabricated camp units. Site preparation would typically include clearing and grading. Services for the camp would be temporary and stand alone, similar to camps throughout the region today.

RV Parks & In-Community Accommodation

RV parks could provide accommodation for workers who choose to bring their own RV. This would include use of or additions to existing serviced RV parks, un-serviced / self-contained RV sites near camp housing or remote job sites. The project workforce assumed to make use of RV site options is estimated to be between 100 and 150 workers.

In-community accommodation would include local workers living in personal accommodation, including existing residents or workers who relocate to the region. In addition, BC Hydro or contractor-secured housing may include use of hotels and market housing (apartments, townhouses, and houses). For planning purposes a range of in-community workforce estimates will be considered, ranging from 300 to 500 persons throughout the construction phase.

LOOKING AHEAD

The worker accommodation options assessment will continue to be developed with information from socio-economic baseline information, engagement with local and regional governments, First Nations and stakeholders. Planning updates and options for worker accommodations will be brought forward for public and stakeholder consultation in 2012.

Stage 3: Consultation

The Site C project requires environmental certification and other regulatory permits and approvals before it can proceed to construction.

The Stage 3 environmental and regulatory review process will include opportunities for consultation and input by the public, Aboriginal groups, communities, property owners and stakeholders.

In addition to the consultation opportunities led by the environmental regulatory agencies within the environmental assessment process, BC Hydro will lead several streams of public and stakeholder consultation during Stage 3:

- Regional and Local Government Liaison
- Property Owner Liaison
- Local Area Consultation
- Preliminary Design Consultation

BC Hydro and Aboriginal groups are also engaged in a thorough consultation process that will continue through all stages of the project.

How Input Will Be Used

A Consultation Summary Report will be prepared and released on the project website following each consultation period and Consideration Memos will be prepared, indicating how input has been considered, along with technical and financial information, for project designs or plans, including engineering and environmental mitigation plans.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The following information can be found at www.bchydro.com/sitec:

1. Site C Clean Energy Project: Project Description Report. 2011. (page 33).
2. Stage 2: Consultation and Technical Review. 2009. (page 63).
3. BC Hydro Peace River Site C Hydro Project: Project Definition Consultation, Round 1 Summary Report. 2008. (pages 48-52).
4. Site C Feasibility Review: Stage 1 Completion Report. BC Hydro. 2007. (pages 51-52).

INQUIRIES

Updates on field studies are available at www.bchydro.com/sitec and in the Community Consultation offices in Fort St. John and Hudson's Hope.

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