

May 26, 2021

Director Aimee Watson, Area D
Regional District of Central Kootenay
Box 902
Kaslo, BC V1L 5R4
Via email: AWatson@rdck.bc.ca

Dear Director Watson,

RE: Lardeau Valley Power Assessment Report

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Lardeau Valley Power Assessment report. It is apparent that a tremendous amount of work was put into gathering this information and reviewing potential options, including what can potentially be done at a local level to improve reliability. Overall, we found that the report provided a reasonably accurate representation of the current situation in the Lardeau Valley.

I requested that our vegetation maintenance and regional distribution planning teams review the options presented in the report, and I am pleased to share their analysis with you:

4.2.1.1 Reduce Tree Cover Near Power Lines: BC Hydro has an extensive vegetation program in place, and our Vegetation Management team regularly inspects trees and other tall vegetation growing under or adjacent to transmission and distribution power lines to identify potential problems. In 2020, we invested \$154,000 on routine maintenance in this area. This work included the removal of 116 hazard trees, as well as pruning and slashing. Our data shows that our vegetation maintenance efforts in this area has reduced the number of customer interruptions by half from 2020 to 2021, confirming that our approach is providing improved reliability to the community. BC Hydro will continue to monitor the reliability and will increase focus on the vegetation management in the area.

Widening the right-of-way clearance on either side of the distribution line would not make any significant difference to the number of tree related outages, unless the right-of-way was widened to the height of the surrounding trees, some of which can be 30 metres or more. Widening the right-of-way also removes the stable edge trees, leaving behind the trees that have not grown in an open environment and rely on others for stability and protection from wind. The results of widening the right-of-way can cause an increase in tree related outages, as well as potential slope stability issues.

In addition, removing perfectly healthy trees along the distribution corridors is outside of the scope of our vegetation maintenance program and may be in contrast to expectations of coexisting in a forested environment, one that recognizes the impacts of climate change and understands the trees are our closest allies to capturing carbon.

- **4.2.1.2 Renew Service Agreement with FortisBC:** Until 2013, FortisBC stationed a power line technician (PLT) in Kaslo and as part of a service agreement with BC Hydro to respond to outages. That PLT retired and FortisBC has not stationed any new PLT at Kaslo and the service agreement was not renewed. If BC Hydro crews were to be stationed in Kaslo, there would need to be a full complement of three PLTs to respond to trouble calls. There is not enough work in the Kaslo and Lardeau Valley area to justify three full-time employees. A few years ago, BC Hydro added a PLT to the existing crew in Nakusp, which has assisted with a quicker response to trouble calls in the Lardeau Valley.
- **4.2.1.3 Provide Secondary Grid Connection:** The terrain and isolation of this area would make it extremely difficult and costly to bring in a second line. The cost to build a second line would be in the multimillions, and there is also the added complexity of crossing through the FortisBC service area. There are many communities across the province that are on a radial line, including Nakusp, New Denver, Silverton, and all of the North Thompson valley from Kamloops to Valemount.
- **4.2.1.4 Move Distribution Lines Underground or Underwater:** Undergrounding would be quite expensive compared to the current overhead lines. It can cost up to ten times more to build and install underground lines versus overhead lines. In addition, it can take significantly longer to address problems when they occur as the lines are not as accessible. We will continue to study the outage data and look to make improvements to the distribution line where possible.

BC Hydro has made significant investments in this area since 2010. We have invested over \$3.8 million to relocate the power line closer to the highway. This has made it easier to access for faster restoration times, which has reduced the duration of unplanned outages in the Lardeau Valley. We have also installed reclosers to improve the power line's performance. These devices minimize the disturbances from tree branches, which now account for only 3% of customer interruptions in the Lardeau Valley. We will continue to monitor our reliability in the Lardeau Valley and will look for ways to improve service for our customers.

It is also important to note that we are experiencing an increase in the frequency and severity of weather events across the province, so we do encourage our customers to be prepared for outages year-round. In the Lardeau Valley, we have recorded spikes in both the frequency and duration of outages resulting from significant storm events in the last two fiscal years. Information on how to prepare for outages is available on our website at <https://www.bchydro.com/safety-outages/power-outages/prepare-for-outages.html>.

I hope that this information is helpful, and we would be happy to meet with you and your constituents to discuss this further. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mary Anne Coules at 250-365-4565 or by email at maryanne.coules@bchydro.com.

Best regards,



Maureen Daschuk
Senior VP, Integrated Planning