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BC Hydro zeros in on Nanaimo

BC Hydro and Calpine Canada Power Holdings Ltd, still looking for a friendly host-municipality for its proposed second gas-fired generating station, has now set its sights on the Duke Point area of Nanaimo. Duke Point is a largely vacant industrially zoned area, host to the Harmac pulp mill and a BC Ferries terminal. It is now seen as a suitable location for the 265-megawatt Vancouver Island Generation Project (VIGP).

'The preliminary site evaluation process, involving local and regional government officials, identified several sites as promising,' said Shawn Thomas, senior vice-president of marketing and communications for BC Hydro. 'However, the tight timeline we face in order to meet the growing demand for electricity on Vancouver Island, requires us to proceed with the sites determined to have most potential at this time.'

The evaluation process examined factors at potential Vancouver Island sites including size, potential environmental impacts, geotechnical considerations, and proximity to residential areas, and zoning. While other sites in North Cowichan and the Regional District of Nanaimo have also been identified as viable, issues regarding infrastructure and rezoning would need to be resolved before more detailed work can be undertaken.

VIGP, a BC Hydro and Calpine Canada proposal, will help meet Vancouver Island's forecast demand for electricity, says Hydro. Additional electrical supply is required on the Island by late 2004, Hydro says. Alternative energy such as wind, ocean wave energy and small hydro projects will also, they say, eventually be added to Vancouver Island's energy mix.

'VIGP will help ensure a continued reliable and economic supply of electricity for Vancouver Island customers,' said Kelly Lail, BC Hydro's manager of resource planning.

The facility will use a combined-cycle turbine and advanced emission control technologies.

'Not only communicating to all stakeholders, but ensuring there is an understanding of the significant importance and benefits of VIGP on Vancouver Island is BC Hydro's and Calpine Canada's focus,' said Brian Vermeulen, Calpine Canada's manager of aboriginal & community relations.

VIGP plans to apply to the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) for permission to construct and operate the proposed facility. The application will include comprehensive environmental and socio-economic studies

A public consultation program is underway. ✉

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