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MEDIA RELEASE

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FUTUREGRID DELEGATES BEGIN TO MAP OUT A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FUTURE

The Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions says recommendations from its recent forum held in Vancouver will form part of a white paper that will provide analysis and advice to government and stakeholders on BC's future energy options. The aim of the two-day forum, "FutureGrid: BC's Energy Options in a Changing Environment," was to bring much-needed constructive debate on the province's future electricity regime.

Dr. Lawrence Pitt, PICS Associate Director and forum organiser, says FutureGrid fostered informed debate among energy experts, climate change researchers and the public over whether BC should expand its electricity production and become a major energy exporter, as laid out in the Clean Energy Act.

"The turnout of more than 230 people at the forum's public panel discussion shows that this issue is very much alive in the minds of British Columbians. People want to know the economic, social and environmental benefits and costs of proposed major projects such as the Site C dam and transmission line extensions. They also want certainty that future energy markets will exist if BC does go down this path."

Key forum findings include:

- New research relating to future energy supplies. This includes results from the Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC) and the University of Washington showing that climate change is expected to boost the performance of BC Hydro's main reservoirs through increased water flows, as well as research from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory showing smart-grid technology that is soon to come to BC can significantly reduce the electricity demand from residential consumers to large industrial users.
- A vigorous debate occurred around the question of "under what conditions should BC become a major exporter of electricity". Led by UBC Professor George Hoberg, the session's findings were distilled into six principles: the conditions would have to be economically advantageous, reliable, lead to greenhouse gas reductions, respectful of First Nations rights and title, foster public legitimacy and promote sustainability, and be reversible. These concepts formed the basis of intense discussion at the evening's public panel event and for the future development of a PICS white paper on the topic.
- The four PICS universities (University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and the University of Northern British Columbia) will be spending in excess of \$2 million dollars this year on carbon offsets in order to meet public sector carbon neutrality requirements that take effect in 2010. Forum attendees also heard that the universities are employing innovative solutions to reduce their GHG emissions and offset costs, including energy efficiency and conservation projects, biomass heating utilization, and district energy systems.

FutureGrid is the second annual in the PICS forum series on timely and relevant climate change related issues. Last year's forum was "Decoding Carbon Pricing: Achieving a Low Carbon Society in British Columbia". PICS is a collaboration of BC's four research-intensive universities hosted and led by the University of Victoria. For more detailed information on the Forum's activities, copies of presentations and background research, please visit: <http://www.pics.uvic.ca/futuregrid.php>.

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