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## Background Paper

**2007: 01**  
**April 2007**

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# TIMELINES OF MAJOR B.C. CROWN CORPORATIONS

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**Paper updated May 2008**

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# **LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA BACKGROUND PAPERS AND BRIEFS**

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## BC RAIL

- 1912 – The Pacific Great Eastern (PGE) Railway – intended to run from Vancouver to Prince George – is incorporated as a private company.
- 1917 – PGE is investigated by a legislative committee, which leads to the incarceration of a witness for refusing to answer questions.
- 1918 – The provincial government acquires PGE when the railway defaults on bond obligations.
- 1921 – A line expansion to Quesnel is completed, then construction stops until the 1950s.
- 1924 – The Galliher Commission investigates charges of mismanagement and misappropriation of railway funds.
- 1956 – The first train finally travels from North Vancouver to Prince George.
- 1958 – The expansion of the line connecting Prince George to Fort St. John and Dawson Creek is completed. “At long last the Peace River country was connected by rail with Vancouver.” The following decade sees what the McKenzie Royal Commission calls “the most ambitious period of expansion” in the railway’s history.
- 1972 – PGE’s name is changed to British Columbia Railway.
- 1978 – The Royal Commission on the B.C. Railway recommends the railway’s transfer to CN or, “in the more likely event that management of the railway remains with the province... that it be made a genuinely autonomous Crown corporation.”
- 1979 – The *British Columbia Railway Finance Act* “enshrines the principle of ongoing government financial assistance for the railway.”
- 1982 – The Select Standing Committee on Crown Corporations issues a report calling for the railway’s financial reorganization.
- 1984 – This is the first full year that BC Rail ships coal over its new electrified line from Tumbler Ridge.
- 1993 – In August, the B.C. labour minister orders BC Rail workers back to work after five-week shutdown.
- 2000 – BC Rail’s president announces the sale of 18 investment properties.
- 2002 – BC Rail ends passenger service from North Vancouver to Prince George. The rail line also says it will sell its marine division.

2003 – The last BC Rail coal train leaves after the closure of the Bullmoose mine near Tumbler Ridge. In May, the government issues a "request for expressions of interest" from private operators who'd like to take operation of the railway.

2004 – CN takes over BC Rail under a long-term lease agreement with the provincial government, with the government maintaining ownership of the rail bed and rail line. The corporation's prime mandate is now the "management of its long-term lease of the former BC Rail corridor lands and track infrastructure to CN Rail." It also continues disposing of "most residual assets and entities, winding up most corporate activities except those related to rail or port operations."

## BC HYDRO

- 1862 – Two years after its founding, the Victoria Gas Company turns on gas lights in the city.
- 1897 – The British Columbia Electric Railway Company, an electric utility and transit company, is founded. A year later, the company's first hydroelectric plant is built near Victoria. The company's streetcars – and later its buses – provide transit service to Vancouver and Victoria for several decades.
- 1945 – The provincial government creates the B.C. Power Commission in order to provide electricity to rural and isolated areas.
- 1961 – With the *Power Development Act*, the provincial government expropriates B.C. Electric to facilitate projects on the Peace River.
- 1962 – The British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority is created when the government merges the B.C. Power Commission and B.C. Electric.
- 1964 – The Columbia River Treaty on the river's hydroelectric development is ratified by Canada and U.S.
- 1967 – The first (Duncan) dam on the Columbia River is completed.
- 1968 – Power is switched on at the W.A.C. Bennett Dam, completed as the first phase of the Peace River project.
- 1978 – Ending Hydro's urban transit business – a role inherited from B.C. Electric – is recommended in an interim report of the Legislative Assembly's Committee on Crown Corporations. The same year, the province establishes the Urban Transit Authority, signaling the end of Hydro's transit responsibilities; however, the corporation maintains transit systems in Greater Vancouver and Greater Victoria until April 1, 1980.
- 1979 – The Committee on Crown Corporations publishes a report on BC Hydro's Columbia River Projects. Also this year, Hydro begins selling additional businesses that were acquired with purchase of B.C. Electric. The following decade sees the creation of subsidiaries to take over aspects of Hydro's business.
- 1981 – The BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) begins holding public hearings on Hydro's proposed Site C project for the Peace River. The hearings last almost a full year, with testimony by more than 100 people at local community meetings and 70 panels of witnesses at formal hearings.
- 1983 – The BCUC issues its ruling, stating Hydro has not demonstrated that Site C is the only possible source for the project.

- 1985 – Hydro’s annual report states the workforce has been reduced by more than 3000 employees since July 1982.
- 1988 – Hydro’s rail freight division and mainland gas division are sold.
- 1989 – The high profile Power Smart program is launched to promote conservation.
- 1990 – Alcan signs a 20-year contract with BC Hydro for the sale of electricity, beginning in 1995.
- 1995 – Hydro restructures around three core business units – power supply, transmission and distribution, and customer services – and two subsidiaries, Powerex and B.C. Hydro International Ltd.
- 1996 – The government announces a freeze on Hydro rates, which have not increased since 1993.
- 2001 – The government issues a request for expression of interest from parties interested in buying its information technology, vehicle fleet, and customer service operations.
- 2003 – Accenture signs a 10-year deal to take over Hydro’s customer services, information technology, human resources, computer services, financial systems, building and office services and purchasing functions.
- 2004 – Hydro increases its rates for the first time since 1993.

## BC FERRIES

- 1951 – The Black Ball Line begins offering ferry service on the South Coast. Until this year, Canadian Pacific ships frequently offer the only service between the mainland and Victoria, according to Gary and Patricia Bannerman’s history of BC Ferries. Other companies – the Gulf Islands Ferry Company and Coast Ferries – offer transportation to the Gulf Islands.
- 1958 – Labour disputes cause travel disruptions between Vancouver Island and the mainland. It prompts the provincial government to promise a publicly-owned ferry service. By November, contracts are awarded to build two 100-car boats.
- 1960 – The M.V. Tsawwassen and M.V. Sidney begin regular service on June 15.
- 1961—The government begins purchasing private ferry services operating in the province, such as the Black Ball Line.
- 1966 – Inside Passage service between Kelsey Bay and Prince Rupert is launched.
- 1976 – A new generation of “jumbo ferries” are launched with the addition of the Queen of Cowichan and Queen of Coquitlam to the fleet.
- 1977 – The B.C. Ferry Corporation is established as a Crown corporation on January 1. Previously, the ferry system was operated by the Department of Energy, Transport and Communications or the B.C. Ferry Authority. The same year, the corporation announces a new route connecting Prince Rupert to Port Hardy.
- 1978 – The government announces a \$60 million ferry construction program.
- 1981 – The Committee on Crown Corporations releases a report on B.C. Ferries.
- 1985 – The fleet now numbers 25 vessels.
- 1992 – Two people die and two are injured when a ferry pulls away from the terminal while a vehicle is still on the loading ramp. Former chief justice Nathan Nemetz oversees an inquiry into the accident which publishes a report in September.
- 1994 – The government announces a 10-year plan for the corporation, including building three “fast ferries” and a new ferry terminal at Duke Point.
- 1998 – The first fast ferry is lowered into the water for the first time.
- 1999 – The auditor general issues a critical report on the fast ferries.
- 2000 – The government announces in March that the fast ferries will be sold.

2003 – BC Ferry Services relaunched as independent company. Its governance structure is laid out in the *Coastal Ferry Act*. The act establishes the British Columbia Ferry Commission, which regulates fares and service levels. Core services to be provided by the new company are laid out in a 60-year contract that comes into effect on April 1. The same year, Washington Marine Group buys the fast ferries.

2004 -- B.C. Ferries announces in September that German company Flensburger Schiffbau-Gesellschaft will build three Super C-class vessels. The B.C. Ferries Board approves a total project budget of \$542 million.

2006 – The Queen of the North sinks, leaving two presumed dead.

## INSURANCE CORPORATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

- 1966 –The government appoints a Royal Commission to look into all aspects of auto insurance in the province. The commission studies the conduct of approximately 175 private companies providing auto insurance.
- 1968 – The Wootton Royal Commission on Automobile Insurance issues its report, recommending compulsory bodily injury insurance coverage for drivers, dependents and passengers.
- 1969 –Legislative provision is made for a government insurance program under an amendment to the *Insurance Act*.
- 1973 – ICBC is created under the *Insurance Corporation of British Columbia Act*. The *Automobile Insurance Act* makes provision for a plan of “universal compulsory automobile insurance.”
- 1974 – Autoplan is available in March. Private insurers operating in B.C. prior to this year question the constitutionality of monopoly public insurance. The B.C. Supreme Court rules the plan is within the province’s jurisdiction. The decision is upheld by the B.C. Appeal Court and the Supreme Court of Canada.
- 1976 – Insurance rates are substantially increased. Newspapers reports suggest some drivers face doubled premiums.
- 1977 – The CounterAttack program, combating drunk driving, is launched.
- 1979 – The *Insurance Non-Discrimination Act* is passed this year. The corporation must eliminate age, sex, marital status and geographic location as factors in determining premiums.
- 1981 – ICBC employees strike for five months, leaving a large backlog.
- 1983 – In July, the Committee on Crown Corporations issues its *Report on the Inquiry into the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia*. The committee offers “numerous recommendations,” but states “we believe that it is a credit to the corporation that radical changes are not seen to be necessary.”
- 1993 – The corporation launches its RoadSense accident and crime prevention programs.
- 1996 – The photo radar program is introduced and ICBC rates are frozen. Also this year, the government announces ICBC and the provincial Motor Vehicle Branch will amalgamate.

- 1998—The corporation extends eligibility for spousal benefits to same-sex partners with common law type arrangements. Newspapers call the move a first for a Canadian auto insurer.
- 2001—The photo radar program is cancelled and the corporation announces its first rate hike in six years. ICBC also announces that nearly 700 employees will take voluntary separation packages.
- 2003 –The *Insurance Corporation Amendment Act* stipulates that auto insurance premiums be set by the BC Utilities Commission.

## B.C. LIQUOR DISTRIBUTION BRANCH

- 1917 – British Columbia outlaws the private sale of liquor.
- 1920 – A referendum is held, asking British Columbians whether they prefer prohibition or government control of liquor sales. Voters choose government control.
- 1921 – British Columbia is the first province in English Canada to end prohibition. The *Government Liquor Act* establishes the Liquor Control Board to regulate liquor sales, which begin on June 15.
- 1932 – The board is taken over by one commissioner, W.F. Kennedy, who holds the position until 1951.
- 1942 – Rationing hits B.C. liquor stores, leading to closures of beer parlors and liquor stores.
- 1951 – Kennedy is replaced as “liquor czar” by Lt. Col. Donald McGugan, who in turn keeps the job until 1969.
- 1952 – The Stevens Commission is appointed to inquire into aspects of liquor distribution and sale. The commission recommends an overhaul of the *Government Liquor Act*. A new statute is passed the next year.
- 1970 – The Morrow Commission, charged with gathering input on the liquor industry, releases its recommendations, calling for liberalization of liquor laws. The government implements some changes, such as allowing the sale of liquor with meals on Sunday. The drinking age is also lowered from 21 to 19.
- 1974 – The government begins easing liquor rules and licenses neighbourhood pubs.
- 1975 – Liquor administration is divided into two branches: the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch, and the Liquor Distribution Branch to oversee retail operations (created under the *Liquor Distribution Act*). The government also initiates some privatization, with the licensing of private stores in remote areas where the population does not support government stores.
- 1987 – A Liquor Policy Review panel gathers public input on the industry. The panel accepts limited privatization, but finds privatization is not supported by the majority of British Columbians.
- 1999 – New legislation allows government liquor stores to accept credit cards and, in some cases, to open on Sundays.

2002 – Over a four-month period, government lifts the restriction on applications for new privately-run retail liquor stores.

2003 – Plans are announced to close government liquor stores. However, in October, the government and the union representing public liquor store workers extend their collective agreement to 2006.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA LOTTERY CORPORATION

- 1969 – Ottawa revises the Criminal Code’s treatment of various “morality” laws, including gambling. The Omnibus Bill allows federal and provincial governments to operate lotteries.
- 1974 – British Columbia joins with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to create the Western Canada Lottery Foundation, with a mandate to hold lotteries in the four provinces. The B.C. legislature passes the *Lotteries Act* and lottery sales in this province begin this year.
- 1984 – British Columbia says it will withdraw from the Western Canada Lottery Foundation and the B.C. Lottery Corporation is incorporated on Oct. 25, 1984.
- 1990 – The Auditor General releases reports on both lottery fund grants and gaming licensing.
- 1993 – The report of the Gaming Review Committee expresses support for “moderate expansion of gaming in B.C. as long as an adequate regulatory framework is in place before hand, and there is player demand to support expansion.” The same year, the Auditor General issues a report finding the corporation has established “adequate policies and procedures for the distribution of funds under its community relations program.”
- 1994 – A gaming policy review is announced. The scope of the review includes the laws governing gaming, potential gaming expansions, the role of First Nations, and the distribution of revenues. Among other recommendations, the report calls for a comprehensive new gaming act, the creation of a Gaming Control Branch and an independent appeal board.
- 1997 – The provincial government announces a new gaming policy in March, allowing the corporation to conduct and manage slot machines in casinos and electronic/linked bingo in bingo halls. The minimum age for gaming is set at 19.
- 1998 – The corporation takes responsibility for table games in casinos, making it responsible for all casino gaming in the province.
- 2001— The government announces the five agencies responsible for gaming – the Gaming Policy Secretariat, BC Gaming Commission, BC Racing Commission, Gaming Audit and Investigation Office, and the BCLC – will be consolidated into two organizations, the BCLC and the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch.
- 2002 – The *Gaming Control Act* is passed, streamlining gaming legislation under one statute.

2004—The corporation makes Internet play and purchase of several sports games available on its PlayNow website in October.

## CROWN CORPORATION GOVERNANCE

- 1977—The *Crown Corporation Reporting Act* is passed, providing for the appointment of a special committee to inquire into the management and operation of five corporations: ICBC, BC Hydro, BC Rail, BC Ferries, and the Housing Corporation of BC. The act came about because of “dissatisfaction with the traditional control mechanisms – the designation of responsible ministers to act as links between the Executive Council, the corporation and the Legislature, and the periodic reviews by legislative committees...”
- 1983 – The committee’s annual report notes it is anticipated that the activities of the committee will be curtailed by the removal of its staff.
- 1985 – The *Crown Corporation Reporting Act* is repealed.
- 1987 – A motion is passed calling for the Select Standing Committee on Finance, Crown Corporations and Government Services to review the regulation of the financial planning and advising industry. A report is issued in 1991.
- 1990 – The auditor general releases a report titled *Accountability of Crown Corporations to the Legislative Assembly*. The auditor recommends creating a legislated framework for Crown corporation accountability reporting, supported by government-issued guidelines.
- 1991 – Until this year, according to a report by the Auditor General, “Crown corporations in British Columbia operated quite autonomously... Since then, significant changes have been made. *Financial Information Act* amendments now require a Crown corporation to provide the minister responsible, the Minister of Finance and Corporate Relations, Cabinet and any Cabinet committee with all strategic plans, business plans, capital and operating budgets, and any other information requested by the minister responsible for the corporation.”
- 1992 – The Crown Corporations Secretariat is established. Its purpose is to advise ministers responsible for each corporation and to advise the Cabinet Committee on Crown Corporations.
- 1996 – The auditor general releases a report on Crown corporation governance. It recommends the government review the current system of governance and that “the authorities required to establish or dissolve Crown corporations should be stated clearly...”
- 2000 – The *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act* is passed, providing an “accountability framework and requirements for government and government-related organizations.”

- 2001 – The *Budget Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act* is passed, requiring the government fully implement generally accepted accounting principles in its budget. The statute also stipulates that government organizations provide three-year service plans that are made publicly available. The Select Standing Committee on Crown Corporations is appointed to review the annual reports and service plans of B.C. Crown corporations.
- 2002 – In its service plan, the renamed Crown Agencies Secretariat notes organizational changes, including a shift from “focusing on operational management issues of individual Crown agencies to strategically overseeing the entire system of Crown Agencies in B.C.”

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