

# The Columbia River Treaty

## TREATY HIGHLIGHTS



- ▶ The 1964 Columbia River Treaty is an international agreement between Canada and the United States of America for the cooperative development and operation of water resource regulation for the upper Columbia River.
- ▶ Through a separate B.C. and Canada agreement, the Province undertook the obligations to construct and operate the three Canadian Treaty Dams and received the related power and flood control benefits.
- ▶ The Columbia River Treaty grew out of two major challenges facing both Canada and the U.S. in the 1940s:
  - ▶ periodic and sometimes devastating flooding to the area due to an unregulated Columbia River, and
  - ▶ an upswing in the post-war economy and population requiring greater energy resources.
- ▶ The Treaty has no termination date, but has a minimum length of 60 years. It is possible that one or both countries may wish to renegotiate parts or all of the Treaty or terminate the Treaty.
- ▶ Either Canada or the United States can terminate most of the provisions of the Treaty any time on or after September 16, 2024, with a minimum 10 years' written advance notice.
- ▶ Unless it is terminated, most of the provisions of the Treaty continue indefinitely.
- ▶ The Columbia River system is the most important watershed in the Pacific Northwest — originating in British Columbia, the Basin encompasses Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.
- ▶ The Treaty requires coordinated operation of reservoirs and flows on the Columbia River, which impacts both Canadians and Americans.

## BENEFITS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

- ▶ The Columbia River is the fourth largest river (by volume) in North America. It is the largest hydroelectric producing river on the continent, with 14 hydroelectric dams in the United States and Canada on the main stem of the Columbia River, and many other dams on tributaries of the Columbia River.
- ▶ The Canadian Columbia basin region provides over 40 per cent of the total electricity produced in B.C. This hydroelectric generation provides low-cost, zero-carbon electricity for British Columbians, supporting the *BC Energy Plan*.
- ▶ The Treaty has brought significant flood control and power benefits to both countries, including:
  - ▶ Flood damage reduction;
  - ▶ An increase in power generation at downstream facilities;
  - ▶ Assured winter flows for power;
  - ▶ Cash payments and entitlement power for British Columbia;
  - ▶ Construction of the Keenleyside, Mica, Duncan and Libby dams;
  - ▶ At-site generation at the Mica and Libby Dam;
  - ▶ Development of the Revelstoke Dam (1984), the Kootenay Canal Plant (1974), the Arrow Lakes Generating Station and the Brilliant Expansion project were all made possible by the regulation provided by upstream treaty storage.



British Columbia continues to develop its generating potential at its facilities in the Columbia Basin (Brilliant Expansion, Revelstoke Unit 5, Waneta Expansion) while meeting high environmental standards and cooperating with local communities.

## NEXT STEPS

- ▶ The Province is taking a pro-active, measured, systematic and comprehensive approach to study the Treaty and issues related to its future.
- ▶ Many studies and substantial public and inter-governmental consultations are required before any discussion of the future of the Treaty can take place.
- ▶ The Province will be undertaking consultations with affected people in B.C.
- ▶ The Province has asked BC Hydro to gather information on a full range of issues, and consultation plans are being developed.

