
May 29, 2025

British Columbia Utilities Commission
Suite 410, 900 Howe Street
Vancouver, BC V6Z 2N3

Via Email: commission.secretary@bcuc.com

**Re: BCUC Order Number G-126-25 – FortisBC Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) Policy
Comment Period**

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express serious concern regarding FortisBC's proposed Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) policy, concerns that are being raised directly by my constituents. While I appreciate the intent to reduce wildfire ignition from electrical infrastructure, this policy risks creating greater harm than it prevents—particularly for rural communities like those in Boundary-Similkameen.

Under the proposed plan, FortisBC may cut power to entire communities for up to 72 hours during forecasted wildfire conditions. Yet by FortisBC's own estimation, the conditions that would have triggered such a shutdown have occurred only once in the past ten years. This raises a fundamental question: are we trading a rare ignition risk for a much more probable and widespread public emergency?

The potential impacts of a PSPS event are deeply concerning:

- **Public Health Risks:** Extended outages during periods of extreme heat could endanger vulnerable residents—particularly seniors, medically dependent individuals, and young children—who rely on powered cooling systems and medical equipment.
- **Communication Failures:** Fibre-based phone systems and internet infrastructure depend on electricity. A prolonged outage would render emergency alert systems, including 911, inoperable in many rural areas.
- **Loss of Critical Services:** Most rural cooling centres lack backup power and have limited capacity. Even under normal conditions, these facilities are insufficient in my region.
- **Economic Harm:** Power outages of this nature can devastate local businesses, disrupt farming operations, and result in the spoilage of entire harvests.
- **Burden on Local Governments:** Emergency Management BC policies currently do not fund planned outages, meaning local governments and First Nations would be left to bear the entire financial and logistical burden of responding to a PSPS activation.
- **Lack of Infrastructure Mapping and Response Plans:** Conversations with FortisBC make clear they are still working with communities to identify critical infrastructure. Communities need more time to prepare their own response plans.
- **Vulnerable Citizens Asked to Self-Register:** FortisBC appears to be relying on vulnerable individuals to self-register. What is unclear is what happens next—will those individuals receive



Donegal Wilson MLA Boundary- Similkameen

Opposition Critic for Water, Lands, Natural Resource Stewardship, & Wildlife

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backup power, evacuation support, or wellness checks if they cannot be reached? The current plan does not provide adequate assurances.

With wildfire season already upon us, I urge the Commission to **reject approval of the PSPS policy in its current form** until the following conditions are met:

1. A thorough risk-benefit analysis is conducted comparing wildfire ignition likelihood with the health, safety, and economic risks of a pre-emptive shutoff.
2. A comprehensive emergency support and reimbursement framework is established for affected communities, with specific provisions for rural and Indigenous areas.
3. Detailed plans are presented for safeguarding communication systems, medical needs, and cooling facilities.
4. Transparent, timely, and meaningful consultation with affected communities is required prior to any PSPS activation.
5. Each individual who registers as a “Vulnerable Person” with FortisBC is contacted and provided with a clear, actionable plan for assistance, including contingencies if they cannot be reached during an event.

The power grid is not just an economic asset—it is a lifeline. Any policy that removes that lifeline must be subject to the highest level of scrutiny. British Columbians deserve wildfire prevention policies that protect both public safety and human dignity.

Sincerely,



Donegal Wilson

MLA for Boundary-Similkameen

Official Opposition Critic for Water, Lands, and Resource Stewardship

cc:

The Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Energy and Climate Solutions

FortisBC

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Town of Princeton

Lower Similkameen Indian Band (LSIB)

Upper Similkameen Indian Band (USIB)

Regional District of Kootenay Boundary

City of Greenwood

Village of Midway



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