

January 18, 2011

No. 51

## **BC Hydro Smart Metering Program to provide major benefits to customers: enhanced system safety, reliability and more**

**Attention editors:** *New video, audio and photos now available for media at [www.bchydro.com/media](http://www.bchydro.com/media)*

**Vancouver** – As part of BC Hydro's ongoing effort to keep customers informed and engaged in the opportunities offered by smart meters the utility today released the Smart Metering and Infrastructure Business Case on [www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com). The Smart Metering Business Case details how the program delivers over \$500 million in net benefits over the next 20 years. Net benefits mean lower rates for customers in the long-term, reducing them below what they would otherwise be in the absence of BC Hydro's investment in the program.

The document includes comprehensive details about the program's customer and financial benefits, including the modernization of B.C.'s electricity system, improved safety and reliability, reduced electricity theft, and the ability to provide customers with new tools to manage their energy use and ultimately save money.

"The electricity system is the backbone of our economy and smart meters are essential to keeping our system affordable, safe and reliable," said Minister of Energy Steve Thomson. "With smart meters, BC Hydro customers will receive better service and new tools to manage their own energy use. The financial benefits are clear, BC Hydro's business case details how the program pays for itself by making our hydro system more efficient and reducing electricity theft, which currently costs ratepayers up to \$100 million a year."

The Smart Metering Program involves replacing existing customer meters with smart meters starting later this summer and upgrading the technology and telecommunications infrastructure that BC Hydro uses to manage the electricity system in a reliable, safe and cost-effective manner.

### **Major program benefits include:**

- Improved safety and reliability;
- Enhanced customer service;
- Reduced electricity theft;
- Improved operational efficiency and reduced wasted electricity;
- Greater customer choice and control;
- Modernization of B.C.'s electricity system;

"Keeping our customers up-to-date with the latest information about the Smart Metering Program is a top priority for us as we prepare to install the meters later this year," said Bev Van Ruyven, BC Hydro Deputy CEO and Executive Vice President. "As B.C. continues to grow, so has our need for more electricity and a modernized, safe and reliable grid to supply power to our customers. The Smart Metering Program is a key component of our commitment to replace and upgrade aging facilities and systems across the province as we take steps to plan for future generations and keep rates as low as possible."

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Smart meter deployment across the province will include a number of elements. First, customers will begin to receive notification early this year that meters are coming to their community and information about what they can expect. Meter deployment will begin in mid 2011 and conclude at the end of 2012. For most customers, installation will be simple and will only take a matter of minutes. Then, in mid 2012 customers will receive information about in-home feedback options that will provide them with the ability monitor their energy use in near-real-time and make adjustments to save money.

A backgrounder including the **top 10 questions asked** about **smart meters** is attached. Further information is available at [www.bchydro.com](http://www.bchydro.com).

**Attention Editors:**

New video, audio and photos related to the smart meter program are available now for download and immediate use at [www.bchydro.com/media](http://www.bchydro.com/media), including:

- Minister of Energy Steve Thomson
- Bev Van Ruyven, BC Hydro Deputy CEO and Executive Vice President
- Gary Murphy, BC Hydro Chief Project Officer, Smart Metering
- B-roll and photos of smart meters and BC Hydro's smart meter lab

**About BC Hydro:**

Fifty years ago, British Columbians turned to BC Hydro to build the clean electricity system they count on to power BC's economy, create jobs in every region, and keep the lights on. Now BC Hydro is building again for the next 50 years. B.C. continues to grow and so has the need for more electricity. That's why BC Hydro is building, renewing, and encouraging conservation to meet today's needs and those of future generations, and today's announcement of the smart metering business case is an example of this. In 2011 BC Hydro is celebrating 50 years of providing power for British Columbians, and inviting them to help prepare for the next 50 years.

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## Backgrounder

### Top Ten Questions on Smart Meters

- 1. Why do we need smart meters?** The Smart Metering Program will make our electricity system safer, more reliable, it will improve customer service, reduce electricity theft, and it will create the foundation for a modernized electricity grid that can accommodate new technologies. It's also important to note that existing electro-mechanical meters are nearly obsolete and will not be manufactured much longer.
- 2. Will my rates go up because of smart meters?** No, the project will pay for itself and in fact delivers over \$500 million in net benefits over 20 years. These benefits mean lower rates for customers, reducing them below what they would otherwise be in the absence of BC Hydro's investment in the program.
- 3. Are you introducing time of use rates?** BC Hydro will maintain the existing rate structure throughout the meter installation period. The business case for the smart metering program includes only voluntary time-of-use rates in the estimate of the program's benefits. BC Hydro is in the early stages of considering rate structures that will offer incentives for customers to use less electricity. Any proposal for new voluntary rate structures will have to be reviewed and approved by the independent BC Utilities Commission.
- 4. Will customers have to save energy for the Smart Metering Program to work?** No, more than 80 per cent of the benefits from the program will be delivered through operational efficiencies within BC Hydro such as theft reduction and meter reading optimization. That means customers don't have to take action for the program to pay for itself.
- 5. How long will it take to install a smart meter at my house?** Installation takes only a few minutes and most customers will not need to be home when the exchange occurs.
- 6. When will I get my smart meter?** Installation will begin this summer and customers will receive advance notification that BC Hydro will be exchanging their existing meter with a smart meter.
- 7. Doesn't BC Hydro already know when the power is off?** No, BC Hydro is not aware of power outages for residential customers and small businesses until customers call to inform us that their power is out. Smart meters will pinpoint problems quickly and automatically which will help get the power back on faster and safer.
- 8. Will BC Hydro be able to tell when I'm home and what I'm doing?** No, BC Hydro will only be getting aggregated hourly data which informs us how much electricity was used. More specific information about household use is limited to the "home area network" used by customers who choose in-home display devices. All of this data is protected by extensive security and privacy provisions in the infrastructure including the use of data encryption similar to that used by online banking systems.
- 9. Is the radio frequency emitted by smart meters safe?** Yes, smart meters emit less radio frequency than a baby monitor.
- 10. What have you learned from the experiences of other jurisdictions?** We have benefited by learning from the implementation experience of other utilities. Examples include using proven meter technology, maintaining existing rate structures through the installation period and dedicating more resources to ensuring customers are informed throughout the process.