



WATER SUPPLY ASSOCIATION OF B.C.  
P.O. Box 22022, Penticton B.C. V2A 8L1  
Phone and Fax: (250) 497-5407 email: watersupply@shaw.ca

## **A Position Statement of the Water Supply Association of B.C. Regarding the Proposed Sale of Crown Leases on Drinking Water Reservoirs**

June 18, 2002

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held at the offices of the Black Mountain Irrigation District in Kelowna, BC at 2:30 PM June 12, 2002 the following position statement was passed unanimously by the Board of Directors.

Present:

Jack Allingham  
Kevin Huey  
Mike Mercer  
Andre Miller  
Toby Pike

Phil Ruskowsky  
Mike Stamhuis  
Karen Walker  
Bruce Wilson

**The Water Supply Association of B.C. opposes to the proposed sale of crown leases located adjacent to drinking water reservoirs. Further, in the interests of source water protection, the board requests that Land and Water British Columbia Inc. not renew these leases past the current tenure.**

Rationale:

- **Source water protection:** Water quality is inextricably linked to land use. Rainfall can pick up contaminants from the atmosphere, from natural sources, and from a whole range of human land uses before entering streams and lakes or seeping underground into aquifers.

The impact of recreation on water quality has been very difficult to quantify until quite recently. Two recent reports sponsored by the Water Quality Branch (WQB) of the former Ministry of Environment have demonstrated quite dramatically the impact that human and domestic animals can have in community watersheds.

The following table has been adapted from the WQB sponsored report: *The Effects of Recreation on Drinking Water Quality within the Lamby, Kelowna and Mission*



*Creek Watersheds, Kelowna, British Columbia 2000*, Burke Phippen, RPBio – BWP Consulting. May 2001.p28.

Frequency distribution of the ribosomal RNA results for *E. coli* samples collected at the SEKID, GEID and LID intakes<sup>1</sup>:

|                        | SEKID |       | GEID |       | LID |       |
|------------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|-----|-------|
|                        | #     | %     | #    | %     | #   | %     |
| Cattle                 | 46    | 27.7  | 57   | 34.1% | 3   | 12.0% |
| Humans and Domestic An | 47    | 28.3  | 43   | 25.7  | 8   | 32.0  |
| Wildlife               | 53    | 31.9  | 54   | 32.3  | 11  | 44.0  |
| Unknown                | 20    | 12.0  | 13   | 7.8   | 3   | 12.0  |
| Total                  | 166   | 100.0 | 167  | 100.0 | 25  | 100.0 |

As the above study clearly shows, the presence of humans, domestic animals and cattle in the watershed clearly has a detrimental impact on water quality. The opportunity to develop provincial crown land use policy to directly benefit and protect public health is obvious. This applies not only to recreational regulation, but also to agricultural policy within community watersheds.

- **Pending legislation:** Provincial authority governing water resources consists of a matrix of ministries and regulations. There is no lead agency responsible for potable water from source to tap in the province. A number of ministries and agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and mandates regulate the local water purveyor. Current legislation and provincial government responsibility for drinking water is piecemeal and haphazard and the time has come for thoughtful review of public policy and the regulations pertaining to the protection and safety of the public water supply in B.C.

In the wake of a highly critical report on source water protection by the Auditor General in 1999 and the more recent Walkerton Tragedy in May of 2000, the former Minister of Environment, Lands and Parks presented the *Drinking Water Protection Act* to the legislature in the spring of 2001. The act received third reading in the legislature before the spring election, at which time the newly elected government chose to subject the act to a thorough review by an impartial panel of experts. The

<sup>1</sup> SEKID: South East Kelowna Irrigation District; GEID: Glenmore Ellison Improvement District; LID: Lakeview Irrigation District.



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Drinking Water Review Panel issued an interim report on December 14, 2001 and a final report in February of this year.

The WSABC is highly supportive of the DWRP final report. The association feels the panel has managed to identify the key challenges facing water purveyors throughout this province and suggest bold and innovative ways for government and industry to meet these challenges. Key among the panel's recommendations is the creation of a lead provincial agency for drinking water and the implementation of a number of measures and procedures to protect source water quality.

The association had hoped the government would announce its decision on the panel's recommendations this past spring. The decision has been delayed, however, and it is hoped an announcement will be coming this fall. Given the WSABC's opposition to the sale of crown leases and the pending decision regarding the Drinking Water Protection Act, it would be premature for Lands and Water BC Inc. to move forward on this initiative at this time.