From: ***PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS REMOVED***
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2010 2:13:18 AM
To: Living Water Smart ENV:EX
Subject: WAM comment submission

WAM Comment Submission

To Whom It May Concern:

Several internationally renowned books have been written in recent years about water as the number one issue faced by all species on the planet. Several of these experts have indicated that Canada is being watched internationally for how we deal with our water as we are the number one country in the world with fresh water resources. I encourage you to have courage to fully realize the import of our decisions we make about water in this province, and hence this country - this is not an issue that can be brought home in a few months of study. All future generations on this planet are depending on us to take the long range view, and I humbly ask of you to put aside your government hats for a moment and truly consider your role, my role, all our roles at this 'tipping point' moment in the history of this planet's very existence.

Specifically dealing with the proposed changes to Water Modernization Act, there are many points within this proposal which give a false sense of security to water protection in this province. Water cannot be discussed without first seeing it as a human right and a right for all other species we share the planet with.... it is part of the commons and collectively held by all of us in trust, including the government, to manage in the public interest and the interest of all species. We do not so much own it, rather we are all stewards of water and therefore charged with the responsibility to protect, sustain and help our waters thrive for all future generations.

It is said that history isn't about who wins or loses, rather human history is the evolution of thought. In the discussion about water it behooves us to broaden our thought and scope about water, to see it within the context in which it lives. It lives in the air, in the mountain tops, the valleys, it lives in the landscapes it winds through and in our bodies. True water protection must include the human uses of the land it winds through, otherwise it is like cleaning the surface of the street as it runs through a polluted industrial wasteland. For 8 years I lived in a gold mining community, for hundreds of miles around the mines, everything on the surface was dead.... and I mean everything... every tree, every bush, every flower, every drop of water was contaminated with arsenic and cyanide. A hundred years from now, people will shake their heads in disbelief at us for not realizing you cannot separate the water from the land it lives on.

Equally incongruous is the aspect of devolving some of the uses and protections of water to other Acts. Section 9 of the Water Act devolves water protection to various other Ministries Acts, including Forestry, Mining, Gas & Oil. This devolution (the opposite of evolution) pits those involved in the resource extraction business at cross purposes to the protection of water as the commons. It's like asking the fox to protect the hen house - it's in the fox's basic nature to want to consume what is in his path - not protect it (unless he is saving it for his supper later). A dangerous proposition for something as vital as water is to our existence.

To move towards co-creating solutions for true water protection, here are important points to include in a comprehensive Water Act :

* re-establish Watershed Reserves for source protection from forestry/mining and other resource extraction activities; watershed reserves protect our drinking water supplies as we well know as mountain dwellers here in BC
* include collaborative science, traditional knowledge and local history to inform all allocation decisions, while insuring First Nations social and cultural practices associated with water are respected and accomodated
* utilize a precautionary principle, functioning at all times (no harm proof prior to new uses, not mitigation after damage)
* "if it's not broke, don't fix it"... leave FITFIR (First in time, First in right) unchanged since it is a self-regulating system for over-allocation problems. To modify FITFIR could allow future governments to remove water rights from established farms, water systems, and other uses
* do not change Domestic Use licensed use to a "permitted" use in order to retain legal rights
* Governance model ideally shall fully fund local government model with local decision-making power over water protection. If in the interim this is not possible in our current economic climate, then stick with the status quo - do not change the model until broader scope, full funding and full public consultation is part of the process
* enlarge public involvement to cover further steps in the process (rather than the current government decision making model with this 'one time only' workshop/comments). Water protection is too critical and timely as a essential part of living on this planet.

I have lived without water before, I have lived without trees, in the barrens of the high Arctic....this is not a scenario I would wish upon anyone. We do not have another planet earth close by to go to when the waters of this planet have all become polluted. Foresight was one of the things that gave us the ability to survive as a species. This is a time for us to forge a new way of evolving with urgency, clarity and hope....with all players at the table thinking in a new way about future generations of all species on the planet.

Respectfully,

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