

**From:** Bob Sarti \*\*\*Personal Identifiers Removed\*\*\*  
**Sent:** Friday, November 15, 2013 8:40 AM  
**To:** Living Water Smart ENV:EX  
**Subject:** Water Sustainability Act

*Please find below the submission of the Hornby Island Water Stewardship to the legislative proposal overview of the proposed B.C. Water Sustainability Act.*

*We are a non-profit volunteer group whose mandate is to protect groundwater resources on Hornby Island. Since 1993, we have been very active, including:*

- Collaborating on the Hornby Island groundwater pilot project with the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and The Islands Trust. It was one of the first such projects ever undertaken in B.C.*
- Conducting over 800 well-water, runoff and marine water tests under Environment Canada guidelines to determine level of fecal contamination; and to promote educational programs water issues.*
- Sponsoring or co-sponsoring eight scientific studies and projects.*

*As with many other groups, we are disappointed by the short time frame for responses to these important issues. Our submission was necessarily truncated. We urge you to extend the deadline to allow for more deliberate and comprehensive responses.*

*For further information, you can contact me on behalf of Hornby Island Water Stewardship.*

*Thank you,  
Bob Sarti.*

# Hornby Island Water Stewardship submission on the proposed new B.C. Water Sustainability Act – Nov. 15, 2013

On July 28<sup>th</sup> 2010 The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution recognizing the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as “essential for full enjoyment of the right to life”.

This resolution should be the guiding principle in regulation of the use of water in B.C.

No life can exist without water, and there is a finite amount of water in the world. Water cannot be manufactured and added to the ecosystem. Human activity can only change the form water takes, it cannot increase the amount of water in the system. Therefore, all human activity has an impact on water, and this must be the primary consideration in drafting regulations.

There is already a large number of individuals and organizations all over the world successfully practicing the installation and use of rainwater collection.

Collection of rainwater and on-site storage for potable use should be encouraged by means of cash incentives and information handbooks.

Redundant regulations, such as the requirement that water used in toilets must be potable should be eliminated.

Regulation of groundwater should apply to *all* water extraction, including domestic wells.

Water licences should be reviewed after 5 years.

Hornby Island and most other Gulf Islands are stressed-out zones of water usage because of their limited land base and growing populations. Population density is putting pressure on aquifers. We believe the Gulf Islands should constitute a special zone of water protection and regulation. The distinctive geology and geography of the islands, without access to glacial runoff, rivers or large lakes, is different to other parts of the province and should be treated differently. Hornby Island, for one, has neither pumped-in water nor pumped-out sewage for treatment at a centralized plant. These are not feasible on this island.

One of the chief areas of contention is unregulated commercial extraction of water in residential areas. At present, a property owner has unfettered right to extract water from an aquifer for sale. Adjoining property owners are obliged to prove that their right of access to adequate water is adversely affected by extraction. They must do this by keeping a log for two years before withdrawal has started – clearly impossible when the neighbor can begin extracting without any prior notice.

Therefore, we urge that groundwater not be withdrawn from residential areas for commercial purposes. Specifically:

- That water withdrawal is an activity attached to each property where this occurs, not at point of sale.
- That owners of adjacent properties be advised of an operator's intentions to withdraw water for sale prior to withdrawal.
- That a permit be required for each property used for water withdrawal
- That the applicant must prove water withdrawal will cause no harm to surrounding properties dependent on a common aquifer.
- That the operation must not be a noise nuisance, through pumping or trucking, to other residents.

## A MINISTRY OF WATER

Water is so important that once we have a meaningful Water Act (legislation and regulations), a separate Ministry of Water will be required to implement and monitor. Virtually all Ministries in the BC Government have "water connections"!

Ministries of Environment, Health, Agriculture, Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Aboriginal Affairs, Energy and Mines, Natural Gas Development, Jobs Skills and Tourism, Transportation and Infrastructure, International Trade, are the most obvious. But, think about Education, Children and Families, Communities and Culture and Sport, certainly Finance, and Justice, Social Development and Innovation, and Technology Innovation and Citizens Services, all in many unique ways influence or are influenced by WATER!

The Ministry that is developing a piece of legislation that involves surface water or ground water should inform other ministries that could be affected by the water activity in order to discuss possible outcomes? Right now, there is no such information exchange.

The public must be able to provide input in an on-going way, and needs to understand how implementation will impact their environment and their WATER?

A strong Ministry of WATER should be focused on protecting the *quality and quantity of provincial water that belongs to us all.*

A Ministry of Water would pull together *legislation pertaining to WATER:*

- There would be dynamic communication between ministries, e.g.. Mines and Resources would learn of the First Nations' needs to protect their sacred/culturally important places;
- Exporting of bulk water in small bottles would stop;
- a BC wide education program about the reasons to protect our precious water will be developed and publicized and be part of all levels of public education;
- fracking, destructive to huge amounts of water, would be stopped;
- remote communities would receive support and information regarding individual well-water safety, the effectiveness of each septic treatment system and support to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater.

There must be consideration and understanding of all water supplies before an economic development project is agreed upon. And the public must continue to be active participants. All B.C. citizens must have access to information to learn about and influence all proposed uses of our water.

*The Ministry of Water will provide these necessary opportunities!*