

"Water Sustainability Act - Public Input", "Water Sustainability Act - Public Input

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Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment Below is my feedback on the proposed Water Sustainability Act. While it is encouraging to see the BC Government update the 104 year old legislation that governs water in BC, it is essential that it is done right and that the outcome will ensure a truly sustainable water future for the people who call the West Coast home. To that end I am making a clear request that at a minimum the proposed Water Sustainability Act ensure the following outcomes. FIRST NATIONS RIGHTS AND TITLE MUST BE RESPECTED Enough is enough of seeing First Nations interests pushed to the wayside. First Nations have a clear connection to healthy living waterways, ensuring they are involved with the due respect they deserve provides an opportunity not only for stronger water policies and more sustainable management practices, but it also prevents the threat of law suits in the future that drain all of us emotionally and financially. WATER USE FEES MUST MAKE PUBLIC "CENTS" Current industrial/commercial water use fees and the proposed groundwater fee (rental) are set at a ridiculously low rate of 85 cents per 1,000m3. This means that while an average water bill for a family of three in the Lower Mainland, for example, might run around \$650 per year, a multi-national corporation like Nestle is able to get away with paying about one third of that amount while consuming many thousand times more water and making millions of dollars in profit. These low fees point to a major missed opportunity to properly resource better water management and governance in BC. A higher, more appropriate fee structure for both groundwater and surface water is needed. The Water Sustainability Act must ensure that water use fees make public "cents" by: - Ensuring full cost-recovery by increasing fees to cover basic administrative costs to government for responsibly managing groundwater and surface water; - Undertaking a comprehensive review of the pricing structure for surface water licenses and setting groundwater fees sufficiently high to better resource the comprehensive approach to water management outlined in the Proposal, including supporting monitoring and regular license review, flow assessments, and enforcement; and, - Ensuring that fees go specifically toward resourcing water management and governance, rather than into the province's general revenue. BUILD IN SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE WE CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE There is no question we have more work to do, building stronger local relationships between First Nations and other BC residents, reviewing local science to understand the intersections between our ground and surface water systems, and of course building the capacity on a local level to develop and enforce local watershed plans that protect our home waters. With a new BC Water Act, we need to see an increase in the reviews for license holders so we can continually evolve our water use practices and management systems. Instead of the proposed review periods of 30 year (40 years for power purpose licences) we need to see reviews every 10 years. We need to ensure we are building a water management system that prevents us from ever having to deal with water scarcity, not locking us in to long-term unsustainable water use and draining us dry. Thank you for receiving my clear feedback on the Water

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Vancouver, BC.

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Good day, Honourable Mary Polak, Minister of Environment I am a resident of the Township of Langley, one of the first municipalities to submit documents regarding the BC Water Act when it was first discussed a few years ago. While it is encouraging to see the BC Government update the 104 year old legislation that governs water in BC, it is essential that it is done right and that the outcome will ensure a truly sustainable water future for the people & the natural systems we rely upon to survive. I AM HORRIFIED AT THE BLATANT DISREGARD FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL WATER SYSTEMS BY WAY OF SELLING WATER RIGHTS TO RESOURCE EXTRACTION CORPORATIONS, WHETHER THEY BE NESTLE OR TECH MINING COMPANIES. To that end I am making a clear request that AT A MINIMUM the proposed Water Sustainability Act ensure the following outcomes. FIRST NATIONS RIGHTS AND TITLE MUST BE RESPECTED Enough is enough of seeing First Nations interests pushed to the wayside. First Nations have a clear connection to healthy living waterways, ensuring they are involved with the due respect they deserve provides an opportunity not only for stronger water policies and more sustainable management practices, but it also prevents the threat of law suits in the future that drain all of us emotionally and financially. WATER USE FEES MUST MAKE PUBLIC "CENTS" Current industrial/commercial water use fees and the proposed groundwater fee (rental) are set at a ridiculously low rate of 85 cents per 1,000m3. This means that while an average water bill for a family of three in the Lower Mainland, for example, might run around \$650 per year, a multi-national corporation like Nestle is able to get away with paying about one third of that amount while consuming many thousand times more water and making millions of dollars in profit. These low fees point to a major missed opportunity to properly resource better water management and governance in BC. A higher, more appropriate fee structure for both groundwater and surface water is needed. The Water Sustainability Act must ensure that water use fees make public "cents" by: - Ensuring full cost-recovery by increasing fees to cover basic administrative costs to government for responsibly managing groundwater and surface water; - Undertaking a comprehensive review of the pricing structure for surface water licenses and setting groundwater fees sufficiently high to better resource the comprehensive approach to water management outlined in the Proposal, including supporting monitoring and regular license review, flow assessments, and enforcement; and, - Ensuring that fees go specifically toward resourcing water management and governance, rather than into the province's general revenue. BUILD IN SAFEGUARDS TO ENSURE WE CAN CONTINUE TO IMPROVE There is no question we have more work to do, building stronger local relationships between First Nations and other BC residents, reviewing local science to understand the intersections between our ground and surface water systems, and of course building the capacity on a local level to develop and enforce local watershed plans that protect our home waters. With a new BC Water Act, we need to see an increase in the reviews for license holders so we can continually evolve

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draining us dry. Apply the Water Sustainability Act to all fresh water users. The Objectives in the Water Sustainability Act (WSA) must be enforceable and apply to all sectors and industries, with no exemptions for Oil & Gas or Forestry as is currently implied in the Proposal. Ensure the Water Sustainability Act applies to all water users in the province by: Making Water Objectives be "objectives set by government", meaning that they must be binding on all decision-makers, ministries, and sectors, including the Forestry and Oil and Gas sectors; Including "beneficial use" requirements as an explicit component of the WSA Water Objectives; and, Requiring decision-makers to mandate monitoring and reporting of usage. Thank you for receiving my clear feedback on the Water Sustainability Act. I look forward to seeing the Act updated to ensure that the minimum benchmarks articulated above are met and that the home waters we all rely on are protected as they should be. Sincerely,

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