

Subject: Water, Fire, and Planning

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Your Worship & Members of Council,

There is no shortage of freshwater in the BC Lower mainland. There is only shortage of basic long-range planning by the GVRD. Sustainable water resources are readily available to meet the needs of present population levels and future growth without the need for water metering or any restrictions that have come into effect in recent years. We need only make responsible use of local water resources, the vast majority of which (over 90%) is currently dumped straight into the ocean. Lakes including Capilano, Seymour, Coquitlam, Pitt & Harrison can supply the water needs of 100Million people, and still draw less than 10% of the fresh water available. I don't propose we use water irresponsibly or thoughtlessly. On the contrary, there is an abundance of clean water available for residential, commercial, and farming use, yet still address the needs of the ecology, ecosystems, wetlands, the migration of fish, etc., as well as take account of any future climate changes.

Plainly speaking, the public has been hoodwinked through poor planning over the last 20 years into thinking that there's a water shortage and that we are gluttonous users of this resource. Yes we use twice the daily amount compared to some other industrialized nations, but this ignores the fact that our homes, lawns, and cars are on average far larger than their counterparts. Many people mistakenly believe that water is a limited resource, when in fact it is completely renewable. We are accused of using "drinking water" on our lawns yet the water from our taps is actually unfiltered raw lake water. Except for the occasional times of high turbidity, particularly from the Capilano lake, the planned "filtered" water will differ little from our current drinking water quality -- this after spending hundred's of millions of dollars. The priority has been misplaced; we need access to more water before anything else. Water from our largest sources (Coquitlam, Pitt, Harrison lakes) are so clean there is little need that they ever be filtered.

The threat of forest fires, especially those started on private property adjacent to our forests, (which was how the massive fire that burned the town of Barriere got started) can be substantially reduced by keeping vegetation on these properties lush and green. You have only to look at all the dry grasses, some very tall due to government cutback in maintenance of roadside areas, to see the enormous potential for uncontrollable fires. Watering restrictions have imposed an added risk to both our forests and our homes. I view the GVRD's planning for our water needs as incompetent when we have a situation where our properties are not only tinder dry, but may even lack enough water to eventually fight accidental fires. Ironically, the desert location of Phoenix Arizona, with their assured long-term water supply, is in a better position to respond to a drought than we are! Currently (Sep 1/2003) Pheonix has no residential water use restrictions.

We are facing a potential disaster of the first magnitude -- all because of the incompetence of regional government planning. Increased capacity in delivering water, to meet the needs of a growing population and potential climate changes, is urgently needed, not further water restrictions.

Yours truly,

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