

Subject: RE: Water, Fire, and Planning

Date: Tue, 2 Sep 2003 14:30:59 -0700

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "Corrie Kost" <corrie@kost.ca>, "Don Bell2" <bell2@dnv.org>, "Janice Harris" <Janice_Harris@dnv.org>, "Lisa Muri" <lisa_muri@dnv.org>, "Maureen McKeon Holmes" <Maureen_McKeonHolmes@dnv.org>, "Alan Nixon" <Alan_Nixon@dnv.org>, "Richard Walton" <richard_walton@dnv.org>, "Agnes Hilsen" <Agnes_Hilsen@dnv.org>

CC: <fonvca@fonvca.org>

I agree wholeheartedly with the comments made by Dr. Kost below. If there is now a water crisis in the region than it is solely because of the extensive and sustained mismanagement of the regions water resource policies of the GVRD and the GVWD.

In the last 30 years, the GVRD has commissioned countless studies costing millions of dollars on various aspects of the Region's drinking water issues. Not once, however, has it ever conducted one single comprehensive and all encompassing study of the regions' total water resources or a comprehensive cost benefit study on how these water resources could be accessed.

This includes Pitt Lake which not only contains the largest supply of drinking water in the Lower Mainland but, at the same time, is of the highest quality requiring no treatment whatsoever. It has been estimated that water from Pitt Lake would cost but a fraction of any other water in the region.

As for the unsubstantiated claims that it is too far away to be of economic benefit, this is purely speculation since no such extensive study has been undertaken. In any case it would appear the GVRD is unaware that the systems feeding most cities in North America are at a far greater distance than Pitt Lake is from Vancouver.

At the same time, the GVRD has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on water improvement projects for Capilano and Seymour which, with the exception of Coquitlam, are the two most insignificant systems in the region. In terms of environmental issues they also happen to be the two most vulnerable. This is particularly true for the Capilano which supplies the poorest quality of water in the region. Capilano is also the most vulnerable in the event of an earthquake sitting, as it does, on a geological fault line. It is also quite apart that despite spending millions of dollars on making it leak proof, it is still leaking.

All in all, the present crisis is nothing more than the logical outcome of a level of government that is neither directly elected nor directly accountable yet spends hundreds of million of dollars of the taxpayers' money. The present crisis is nothing less than the logical outcome of a level of government which moves from crisis to crisis and from one costly ad hoc solution to the next.

-----Original Message-----

From: Corrie Kost [mailto:corrie@kost.ca]

Sent: Monday, September 01, 2003 10:39 PM

To: Don Bell2; Ernie Crist; Janice Harris; Lisa Muri; Maureen McKeon Holmes; Alan Nixon; Richard Walton; Agnes Hilsen

Cc: fonvca@fonvca.org

Subject: Water, Fire, and Planning

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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