

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting
British Columbia's Community Water
Supply Sources

(Email: info@bctwa.org)
(Website: www.bctwa.org)



September 4, 2002

To: All Regional District of Central Kootenay Municipal, Village, and Area Councils

Re: The government's order to dissolve the Erickson Improvement District and the related resolutions passed by the RDCK on August 24, 2002

Dear Council members:

As a result of provincial Order-In-Council No. 455 of June 5, 2002, to dissolve the Erickson Improvement District (EID), the chairman of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) stated at the August 24, 2002 meeting that the provincial government "forced" the RDCK to absorb the operations and assets of the EID. As stated in the RDCK's related bylaws No. 1561 and No. 1562 (request copies from your RDCK representative), passed at the August 24 meeting of the RDCK, it establishes the "properties formerly comprising the Erickson Improvement District and the town of Creston" as a "service area" for the RDCK.

We strongly urge your council to pass motions: rejecting provincial OIC #455; and to rescind approval of RDCK bylaws No. 1561 and No. 1562, and the RDCK resolution that instructs CH2M Hill Canada Ltd. "to complete engineering of the Creston/Erickson Treatment Plant ... as set out in CH2M Hill's August 22, 2002 Erickson/Creston Water Supply Options Cost Summary." In doing so, your council will help to resolve the inter-related issues of: the wrongful and undemocratic dismissal of the EID; the unnecessary waste of millions of public tax dollars and long terms costs to farmers and residents of Erickson and Creston associated with the membrane filtration treatment plant; the protection of the Arrow Creek community watershed reserve; the precedent the government and the RDCK are setting regarding the wrongful takeover of the EID; and the potential conflict-of-interest inherent in the RDCK being a shareholder of the Creston Valley Forest Corporation.

Based on our research, we believe that the proposals for the estimated \$11 million membrane filtration plant for Arrow Creek, and the transfer of the Erickson Improvement District (including its water licence(s), its financial reserve of \$2.1 million, and accumulated assets) to the RDCK, can be directly linked to the governmental politics of logging the Arrow Creek community watershed reserve. We believe that an ultra-violet treatment plant, for the approximate cost of \$1 million, will more than adequately disinfect the Arrow Creek as a source of drinking water, given its more than seventy year history of providing dependable, high quality, untreated, and inexpensive delivery of gravity-fed water to the residents of Erickson and Creston from a protected source. Had the EID been allowed to do so by the Ministries of Health and Municipal Affairs in the late 1990s, the EID could have used its available reserve funds and would have remained an autonomous community-based incorporation, thus preventing this artificially created need to obtain federal and provincial infrastructure assistance for an overkill treatment system designed for highly polluted water sources. What has become abundantly clear from the government's insistence on membrane filtration for this historically high quality

drinking water source is that government is fully cognizant of and acknowledges what communities have been saying for decades – logging in drinking watersheds has disastrous affects on water quality with serious consequences for communities.

We are concerned about the manner in which the provincial government “forced” this issue on the EID. We perceive that government has characterized the EID’s position as a health hazard to local residents and perpetrated this “land grab” to eliminate the EID’s long standing, and troublesome to government, legal mandate for protecting the water source in order to place it under the authority of a body with a vested interest in logging. As stated by a member of the public at the end of the August 24th RDCK meeting:

You are setting a precedent here, not only what you do for Erickson, but for communities and citizens throughout the province, who, as you are all well aware of, have watershed issues, and which may come before this Board.” “How does the [RDCK] Board have the authority to vote against the representative who brings the interests of the people [Area B] to this table? (August 24th video transcript)

Furthermore, we have recently learned of the June 2002 poll results conducted for Electoral Area H, the Slocan Valley, where under section 5.4, *Water Issues*, **94%** of the respondents voted that **“the protection of their watersheds was important to very important”**, and **“the maintaining of the quality of drinking water should be an important local environmental priority.”** It is clear from ongoing events in most regional districts that the majority of British Columbians favour the protection of their drinking water sources. However, the RDCK’s participation in the logging of Erickson’s Arrow Creek does not reflect the public’s wishes, so we question the role it has in this whole affair. At issue here is the fact that the RDCK is overlooking the most critical issue, defending the protection of Arrow Creek, a designated community watershed reserve.

Along with this letter, which outlines our concerns, we are including a copy of our seven-page submission and former two-page press release for your council, items presented by us at the end of the RDCK meeting in Nelson (also posted on our website). These items will provide you with more background regarding these concerns. For your additional information, we refer you to a detailed report, available on our website (address posted above), which is a case history of Arrow Creek and the EID. We also distributed the above-mentioned press release to provincial media on February 6, 2002, and then presented it to both Hans Cunningham, Chair of the RDCK and the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM), and to Don Leben, Mayor of Creston, during the lunch hour break at the private UBCM February 7, 2002 meeting with forest industry representatives in Richmond, B.C.

Your help in redressing the matters referred to above is of vital interest to not only the residents of greater Creston and RDCK constituents, but to all British Columbians.

Sincerely,

Will Koop, Coordinator.

cc. RDCK Village, City, and Area Councils

Hon. Premier Gordon Campbell

Hon. George Abbott, Minister of Community, Aboriginal, and Women’s Services

Hon. Colin Hansen, Minister of Health Services

Hon. Joy MacPhail, NDP Official Opposition Leader