

## B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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

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**Hon. Sindi Hawkins,  
Minister of Health Planning**

November 29, 2001

### **Re: Provincial Health Officer's Annual Report for 2000 on Drinking Water**

We are extremely concerned about the timing of the November 19th public release of the *Provincial Health Officer's Annual Report 2000, on Drinking Water Quality in British Columbia*. We note, from the opening letter in the *Annual Report*, that it was submitted to you on Friday, October 12th. From our understanding, the *Drinking Water Review Panel* did not receive the *Report* until the evening of November 18th, the night before your press conference in Vancouver. We also note that October 12th was exactly four weeks before the deadline for written, public submissions to the *Drinking Water Review Panel* on the government's *Drinking Water Protection Act*.

The recent, highly controversial changes to provincial ministries, deregulation programs and cost-cutting measures initiated by your government, and the newly introduced policies of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, which advocate resource exploitation of domestic water sources, heightens our concern that the *Report* appears to have been withheld from a timely review by the *Panel* and the public. Had the *Annual Report* been released in mid-October, the *Drinking Water Review Panel* would have benefitted from the public's formal response to it.

The *Annual Report* is a position paper in support of the continuance of logging, mining, cattle grazing, in domestic water sources. What is even more disturbing is the fact that the Provincial Health Officer, under your administration, is advocating these resource activities, which have degraded water quality in domestic water sources throughout B.C. These activities have negatively impacted the public's health and incurred huge costs related to quick-fix treatment solutions.

Disturbingly, the Provincial Health Officer's position is a declaration to all provincial health officers and the public that exploitation of domestic water sources should be tolerated, supported, and continue, a position which is diametrically opposed to the historical criticism of these activities by former health officers with the Ministry of Health (review our submission to the *Panel*, [www.alternatives.com/bctwa](http://www.alternatives.com/bctwa)).

However, most alarming is your September 28th statement to the *Drinking Water Review Panel* at which time you informed them that you did not want your department involved in land-use decisions regarding domestic water sources.

National attention is currently focused on drinking water. People are concerned and increasingly knowledgeable about the problems which have resulted from poor management decisions in their

watersheds. They expect good leadership on this issue. Why was the *Annual Report on Drinking Water Quality* not released to the *Drinking Water Review Panel* as soon as you received it?

Yours truly,

Will Koop  
Co-ordinator,  
B.C. Tap Water Alliance

cc. Drinking Water Review Panel  
Provincial Health Officer  
Provincial Deputy Health Officer  
B.C. Medical Association