

Liz Condon

Subject: FW: Protection of Groundwater
Attachments: Strathcona Regional District Resolution.docx; Sunshine Coast RD - Water Extraction for the Purpose of Commercial Bottled Water Sales.pdf; Presentation to the District of Highlands.docx

Importance: High

From: Bruce & Nicole
Sent: March 1, 2019 10:08 AM

Subject: Protection of Groundwater
Importance: High

Mayor and Councillors of the District of Highlands;

I am submitting the attached presentation as my official request for action to protect the groundwater of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and request it be added to the agenda of the next available Council meeting.

Thank you for your consideration of my requests.

Bruce Gibbons

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District of Highlands

Presentation to District of Highlands

March 1, 2019

Mr. Mayor, Councillors and staff of the District of Highlands

Request to change the zoning bylaws of the District of Highlands to prohibit the bottling of groundwater for commercial sale or bulk export

My name is Bruce Gibbons, and I live at [redacted] I am submitting this request to address council about the issue of protecting groundwater on Vancouver Island and all over British Columbia. In November of 2017, the Provincial Government approved a groundwater extraction licence for a resident of Merville to extract up to 10,000 liters of water per day from our Comox Valley aquifer, and bottle and sell that water. The licence was contingent on rezoning of his property, and the CVRD denied the rezoning on Aug 28, 2018. Therefore, the current licence does not allow the applicant to utilize his licence and bottle water on his property. However, his water extraction licence is still valid and he has publicly stated his intent to go ahead with the water bottling whatever way he can and to that end he has applied to the provincial government to amend his licence to allow him to truck the water from his well and bottle it at a site that allows water bottling. That is why I am campaigning to have Vancouver Island (AVICC) communities revise their bylaws to prevent this action from this or any other water licence holder.

I am the founder of a group called Merville Water Guardians. I formed the group to oppose the water licence, oppose the rezoning application and to achieve reforms to the Water Sustainability Act to protect the groundwater aquifers of BC. I filed an appeal against the water licence in March, but after a lengthy battle with the FLNRORD Ministry, the Environmental Appeal Board dismissed the appeal, stating that I did not have standing to appeal. There is a serious flaw in the Water Sustainability Act that denies appeal of a water licence unless the licence physically detrimentally affects your land, not your water, not your access to water. The Water Sustainability Act does not protect my water or my access to water. I find that appalling. I have been campaigning against the licence and for protection of our aquifer since March of last year. We have over 320 followers on our Facebook page, and in August we submitted 425 signatures on a petition presented to the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Directors asking them to deny the rezoning and to prohibit water bottling in the CVRD. We have approximately 1,200 signatures to date on a petition to the BC Government asking them to stop approving licences to bottle and sell water from all aquifers in BC. That petition will be presented in the BC Legislature in the coming days by our MLA, Ronna-Rae Leonard. That petition is supported by an online petition with 1,339 signatures to date. Our supporters and followers in the Comox Valley are telling us that water, and the protection of our water was a big issue in the recent local elections and will be a huge issue in the next provincial election. I have most recently posted a video challenge and have sent that challenge to all the MLAs in the BC Legislature, challenging them to put party politics aside and come together to create the legislation to protect our groundwater and stop approving licences to bottle and sell the water from BC aquifers.

There are thousands of residents and farmers all over Vancouver Island who rely on groundwater/aquifers for their only source of water. If that water supply is depleted then those thousands of residents and farmers will not be able to look after their personal needs for drinking water, sanitation, growing their backyard gardens or growing their crops and raising their livestock. That would put our food security at risk. Without water, farmers cannot produce our food, the local

food that so many people desire and rely on. That applies to aquifers all over Vancouver Island and British Columbia. Approximately 22% of British Columbians rely on aquifers, groundwater, for their only source of water for their personal needs and for producing food. Without water, there is no life. We are facing population growth that will put more demand on the aquifers and we are already seeing the negative effects of climate change impact the quality and quantity of water in the summer drought period. We experienced level 4 drought all over Vancouver Island and in many other areas of BC this past summer. We have seen record dry months, record heat and every indication is that these changes are here to stay and will likely only get worse. Residents and farmers are being told to seriously conserve water. Yet we have provincial water licences for commercial profit that will allow extraction of water from the aquifers we all rely on despite the level 4 drought. There is not enough information known about our aquifers to risk bottling and selling any of the water. The licence approval in Merville relied on old data, and technical calculations but did not consider climate change that is producing extended periods of serious drought, putting rivers, streams, fish habitat and fish stocks at risk. It did not consider serious impacts from the receding glacier. We have been fighting to stop this licence but have been thwarted in our efforts. It is clear to me and my supporters that the Water Sustainability Act does not protect our groundwater and needs to be reviewed and revised. We are pushing the Ministry of Environment for revisions to the Act.

In the meantime, there is an existing, real threat to the groundwater of Vancouver Island. Our petition to the Comox Valley RD asked them to amend their bylaws to prohibit the bottling of water in the Regional District in order to help prevent the applicant from bottling off-site. There is indeed a bylaw revision in process that will prohibit water bottling in the CVRD. I made a presentation to the Village of Cumberland asking them to consider a bylaw to prohibit water bottling, and the Village has since changed their zoning bylaws to prohibit bottling of groundwater. On Dec 3rd I asked the City of Courtenay to consider changing their bylaws to prohibit bottling of groundwater in their zoning bylaws. At the Jan. 7th meeting Council passed a motion to prohibit the bottling of groundwater and referred the motion to staff for a full report on options for implementing such a bylaw change. I presented to Town of Comox Council on Feb 20th, asking them to revise their bylaws to prohibit the bottling of groundwater. In September I contacted the Strathcona Regional District (SRD), since the Merville water licence holder had stated his intention to approach them in an attempt to bottle his water in their region. The SRD has taken immediate steps to prevent the water bottling and at a meeting on Oct 25th the SRD also passed a resolution stating that they did not support the Provincial Government approving licences for the extraction of water from aquifers all over BC for bottling or bulk sales. On Jan 24th the SRD passed a resolution to be presented to the AVICC and the UBCM asking the provincial government to cease approval of licences for bottling of groundwater for commercial sale or bulk export. I am now in the process of contacting AVICC member communities asking them to revise their bylaws to prohibit bottling of groundwater, and to support the SRD Resolution. There are 11 communities to date that do not permit the bottling of groundwater, I have presented to Comox and Esquimalt recently, and I am scheduled to present to 3 other communities. I have submitted written requests to several other communities in an attempt to get as many communities as possible to prohibit the bottling of groundwater for commercial sale or bulk export. I have also included an excerpt from the Sunshine Coast Regional District Policy Manual, which illustrates their commitment to the protection of groundwater, and is a policy to ascribe to and emulate.

I have 2 requests for the District of Highlands.

- 1) that you consider taking the necessary steps to implement a bylaw that expressly prohibits bottling of groundwater in any of your zoning, to help in the fight to protect our

groundwater/aquifers for the use of our residents and farmers today and for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren in the future.

2) I also ask that the District of Highlands support the Strathcona Regional District resolution at the April AVICC convention, to ask the Provincial Government to cease the approval of licences for commercial extraction of groundwater resources for bottling or bulk water sales.

a. WHEREAS water is an essential resource upon which all life, including all ecosystems and all local communities depend,

AND WHEREAS water is a public heritage and a public trust for present and future generations and access to water must not be compromised by commercial operations relating to commercial water bottling or commercial bulk water exports,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Premier of British Columbia and the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development be requested to immediately cease the licensing and extraction of groundwater for commercial water bottling and/or bulk water exports from aquifers.

We cannot allow water bottling from our aquifers based on theory and calculations. The consequences of being wrong could be catastrophic. We will continue to do our part to fight the Provincial Government, who have jurisdiction over groundwater licencing, and to support the Strathcona resolution to curtail groundwater extraction for bottling or bulk sales. We would sincerely appreciate the support of the District of Highlands in protecting the above ground uses of our groundwater by preventing anyone from bottling and selling water from any aquifer in BC. I implore you to talk to and work with the Strathcona Regional District to protect the aquifers of Vancouver Island. Water is our most precious resource. Water is life. We must do everything we can to protect and conserve it. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Bruce Gibbons

Strathcona Regional District

Water Protection Resolution

Passed Jan 24, 2019

WHEREAS water is an essential resource upon which all life, including all ecosystems and all local communities depend,

AND WHEREAS water is a public heritage and a public trust for present and future generations and access to water must not be compromised by commercial operations relating to commercial water bottling or commercial bulk water exports,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Premier of British Columbia and the Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development be requested to immediately cease the licensing and extraction of groundwater for commercial water bottling and/or bulk water exports from aquifers.

Sunshine Coast Regional District

BOARD POLICY MANUAL

Section:	Planning and Development	13
Subsection:	General	6410
Title:	Water Extraction for the Purpose of Commercial Bottled Water Sales	10

1.0 POLICY

The Sunshine Coast Regional District does not support the extraction of fresh water resources in gas, liquid or solid form from surface or groundwater for the purpose of commercial bottled water sales.

3.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all streams, lakes, groundwater, and wells within the Sunshine Coast Regional District.

4.0 REASON FOR POLICY

The Sunshine Coast Regional District supports water conservation, solid waste reduction goals, greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, healthy community water infrastructure and protecting the environment for a sustainable future. This policy serves to conserve water in its natural state, to address local and international environmental issues and to support safe, low cost, clean water for communities.

5.0 AUTHORITY TO ACT

Retained by the Board in part and delegated to staff in part.

6.0 PROCEDURE

Do not support any application to Provincial and Federal agencies for the extraction of fresh water resources in gas, liquid or solid form for the purpose of commercial bottled water sales.

Approval Date:	February 24, 2011	Resolution No.	088/11 rec. no. 9
Amendment Date:		Resolution No.	
Amendment Date:		Resolution No.	