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Drinking Water Review Panel Releases Final Report
Panel makes 26 recommendations to safeguard drinking water in B.C.

VANCOUVER, B.C. ... The *Drinking Water Review Panel*, an independent 9-member panel established by the provincial government in September 2001, has issued a final report with 26 recommendations regarding the Drinking Water Protection Act (Bill 20).

The Panel concludes that British Columbians are using too much water and paying too little for its protection. "British Columbia urgently needs this legislation to reduce the risk of water-borne disease. It is time that we paid the full price of protecting our drinking water sources as well as the cost of building and maintaining the infrastructure needed to treat and deliver safe drinking water. It is clear that more funding is needed to reduce the risks to drinking water and to pay for the protection that everyone deserves," says David Marshall, Chair of the Panel and Executive Director of the Fraser Basin Council.

The Drinking Water Review Panel was asked to review the Drinking Water Protection Act (DWPA), and make recommendations regarding its completeness, effectiveness and efficiency. In conducting its review, the Panel reviewed 153 written submissions and 117 surveys. As a compendium to its final report, the Panel also issued a document summarizing the public input received during the course of the panel's review process.

The highest priority recommendations are:

1) Introduction of an amended DWPA in the Spring 2002 legislative session

That the DWPA be retained as a stand-alone Act and that the provincial government amend the Act by incorporating the recommendations of the *Drinking Water Review Panel* and introduce the amended Act in the 2002 spring session of the BC Legislative Assembly.

2) Creation of a single Drinking Water Protection Agency reporting directly to the Minister of Health Planning

- a) Create a single lead Drinking Water Protection Agency reporting to the Minister of Health Planning, to integrate the skills, resources and authority of all provincial ministries with responsibility for drinking water protection.
- b) Appoint a Chief Executive Officer to lead the Drinking Water Protection Agency.

3) Strengthening of drinking water source protection measures

Create a "Purposes" section in the Act and include as purposes:

- to protect water from source to tap,
- to protect humans against water-borne disease and long term adverse health effects, and
- to give drinking water priority over other resource uses in critical or high-risk watersheds (these areas would be defined through the source assessment process).

- 4) Province-wide risk assessments of water systems to identify and prioritise critical drinking water supply areas**
 - a) Assign Drinking Water Officers responsibility for coordination, review and approval of the assessments.
 - b) Require province-wide screening-level risk assessments to identify drinking water supply areas that are at high risk of contamination or are already in critical condition. Full source assessments should be conducted in these areas on a priority basis.

- 5) Creation of a dedicated drinking water protection surcharge**

Consistent with the principle of full-cost accounting and cost recovery enabled through legislation, enable the ability to create a drinking water protection surcharge that is dedicated exclusively for use in drinking water protection (including funding to support Drinking Water Officers in each health region and the Multi-Disciplinary Implementation Teams).

- 6) Development of a comprehensive infrastructure funding program**
 - a) Implement a risk management program to set priorities and focus expenditure of resources.
 - b) Encourage and provide incentives for purveyors to charge rates that reflect the true cost of the water supply system and also build up 10-year capital reserve funds for ongoing maintenance and future upgrades (e.g. through dedicated surcharges).

In addition to these six priority recommendations, there are 20 other recommendations dealing with the role of Drinking Water Officers, support for small systems, tap water standards, water-use conservation measures, drinking water quality protection for First Nations, improvements to groundwater measures, and other issues.

(A copy of the final report is available on the website at <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wat/wq/dw/index.html>)

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