



The
WATERWEALTH
Project

All Candidates Questionnaire

April 18, 2013

The Importance of our Water Wealth

Context: As we talk with more and more people in our communities, the WaterWealth Project is hearing that clean, safe and flowing water in the Valley is one of people's biggest concerns. We've attached the results of our community survey. This survey is echoed by a 2010 McAllister Opinion Research poll that showed 94% of British Columbians believe water is our most important natural resource.

Question 1: If you become our local representative, where will freshwater protection place on your priority list?

1st 2nd 3rd Other

Comments:

I suppose it fits in both first and second. My top priority if elected will be to decentralize the decision making process and return it to the local level about local issues, including protection of our water.

Community Control Over Our Local Home Waters

Context: We are also hearing that people are frustrated with having little to no voice in the decisions that affect our local home waters such as the lack of meaningful consultation on the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the chlorination of drinking water in Chilliwack, and the development of the Aggregate Pilot Project.

Question 2: Do you support greater community involvement in decisions that affect our local home waters and the right for our communities to say 'yes' or 'no' to major proposals that affect us?

Answer:

Absolutely. I started this journey because of the chlorination of our drinking water. One of the biggest issues that I have heard from people over the last few months is that there is no meaningful community consultation about major proposals, and that needs to change!

Question 3: Would you support the formation of a citizens roundtable or watershed board co-chaired by First Nations and non-First Nations community members to provide leadership on a long-term protection plan for our local home waters?

Answer: I think this is a fantastic idea. We have some brilliant people here in Chilliwack and I feel by joining their expertise and experience together, we could come up with a great protection plan for our water.

Indigenous Rights and Title

Context: The waters of the Valley and the life sustained within it have supported Indigenous communities for thousands of years. Long before the first visit of Simon Fraser in 1808, this water wealth allowed them to develop sustainable economies and governance systems. As long-term stewards of lakes, rivers and streams, indigenous communities nurtured the healthy waters we enjoy today.

Question 4: Given that recognition of indigenous rights and title is essential for the long-term protection of our shared home waters, what would you bring to the table to support First Nations-Crown reconciliation of rights and responsibilities?

Answer:

At this time I unfortunately don't have a great understanding of this subject, but I definitely plan to learn more. I do, however, feel that in order for our community to flourish, we need to stop the segregation that seems to be happening between first nations and non first nations.

The BC Water Act

Context: The BC Water Act, our most important piece of water legislation, is over 100 years old and completely outdated. It has no provision to ensure there is enough water in rivers and streams to support fish ('ecosystem flows'); it doesn't put any limits on groundwater withdrawals (BC is the only jurisdiction in Canada with no rules for groundwater removal); and it allocates fresh water through an antiquated system called First in Time, First in Right.

Question 5: Do you support the implementation of a NEW BC Water Act that would ensure enough water flows through our home waters for fish and other wildlife, enacts groundwater protection, creates the framework to enable comprehensive community planning for water protection, and respects indigenous rights and title?

Answer: I absolutely support implementing a new BC Water Act. There are some serious flaws in the current Act that could pose major threats to local communities.

Drinking Water Protection

Context: The recent controversy around the decision to chlorinate Chilliwack's drinking water has highlighted the importance of keeping contaminants out of our drinking water sources (like the Vedder-Sardis aquifer) in the first place. Experts agree the best way to protect drinking water and reduce the need for expensive treatment solutions is to protect the source of drinking water.

Question 5: Do you support comprehensive provincial source water protection legislation that would empower local communities to work with government to develop enforceable plans to protect their drinking water?

Answer:

100% Yes! As I stated earlier, the chlorination of our water without the meaningful consultation that the public requested is why I am here in the first place. We definitely need legislation allowing the community to develop protection plans for our source water.

Your Position on Threats to Our Home Waters

Context - Kinder Morgan is increasing transportation of heavy bitumen oil through its existing **TransMountain pipeline** that crosses 100 rivers and streams on its route from Alberta through the Fraser Valley. It is proposing to **triple** the amount of oil transportation from 300,000 to 890,000 barrels per day by building a new pipeline. Since 2005, there have been four ruptures along the existing pipeline. In 2012, a similar pipeline carrying bitumen ruptured and emptied 3,000,000 litres of bitumen into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, devastating an entire community and becoming the costliest pipeline spill in US history.

Question 6: What is your position on a) the increasing transportation of bitumen through the existing Kinder Morgan pipeline and b) the creation of a new pipeline to triple the capacity of heavy oil transportation?

Answer:

First, I do not support the transportation of bitumen through the existing pipeline. As we've seen recently in the media, this is just asking for a disaster to happen. The old pipes were not built to handle a material as coarse and heavy as bitumen.

I also do not support the creation of the new Kinder Morgan pipeline. Again, this all comes back to public consultation. Having these extremely dangerous chemicals running over our aquifer and under our schools is just not worth the risk.

Context: Government and the aggregate industry has developed the **Aggregate Pilot Project**, which maps out very large areas of this region that would be open to mining for corporate profit. This has been developed with limited input from local communities despite the substantial impact this mining could have on our rivers, lakes, and groundwater that are our drinking water sources, and which support fish, wildlife and local economies.

Question 7: Do you support the Aggregate Pilot Project?

Answer:

No. Once again this comes back to public consultation. I saw a map just the other day that showed that although the Chilliwack River is “protected” the very close-by areas on either side of it are available for aggregate mining. The public needs to be involved in all of these major decisions because we are the ones that will suffer the consequences if something goes wrong, not the politicians and bureaucrats in Victoria.

Context: Scientific experts such as Marvin Rosenau and Otto Langer have shown that the practice of **in-river gravel mining** can be extremely damaging to salmon and other fish habitat, and has questionable benefits for flood control. They have called for the development of a long-term management plan for dealing with this issue for 15 years.

Question 8: Do you support the development of a long-term management plan for sediment removal developed with full involvement of First Nations, scientific experts, and community members?

Answer:

Absolutely.

Private Hydroelectric Diversions (also known as Independent Power Projects) - a freedom of information request from the Wilderness Committee discovered 700 instances of non-compliance at 16 private diversions in the past few years, indicating regulatory disarray for this industry. These projects can cause significant harm to fish habitat if improperly installed and operated and the cumulative impacts can be extremely disruptive to river systems.

Question 9: Would you support undertaking a comprehensive cumulative environmental assessment prior to approving any new private hydroelectric diversions in the Fraser Valley?

Once again, Yes.