

## 2021 Water Dialogue

Wednesday, November 3, 2021 (Via Zoom)

### Introduction by Mayor Bill Beamish, Gibsons

#### WHY:

Thank you all for making time to meet here today not to revisit old matters but to work together to make a solid plan that ensures the protection of our shared watershed and water supply...for a sustainable future. Our objectives for today are to: inform, discuss and decide.

1. we want to inform each other of the overall health of the Elphinstone Aquifer and our concerns with respect to how the Elphinstone Aquifer is being used today and in the future;
2. we want to discuss among ourselves these concerns and to share information about what various stakeholders are doing or planning to do; and,
3. and, we will lay the groundwork to the establishment of a working that will continue to plan and to work toward the protection of the Elphinstone Aquifer area by Legislative and regulatory means.

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The Gibsons-Elphinstone Watershed is a natural asset impacted by natural events like climate change, drought and fires, and by activities on the land, development, human actions - inactions and accidents. While we cannot control or dictate nature, we can and must take control of activities that we enable on the surface or in some cases in the aquifer itself.

It is not to suggest that nothing is being done...it is to understand what is being done and what more is needed in-order to ensure the protection and sustainability of the entire watershed area, within and above the Town of Gibsons.

The Elphinstone-Gibsons watershed and aquifer is a natural system that collects, purifies, stores and protects our drinking water as it has done for centuries. I like to imagine how it might have been 200 years ago with a Squamish Nation village where the harbour is today and the natural artesian spring of drinking water flowing into the harbour...the inhabitants of that Village knew it was great before Berkley Springs ever tested it and acknowledged it as the 'Worlds Best Drinking Water' in 2005.

Today, the watershed still functions, however, it is fragmented by governments and private owners each with different responsibilities lacking coordination and in some cases cooperation. It is like most areas on our planet threatened by climate change, development and increasing demands for its natural services and resource extraction.

In this meeting we are going to focus on the watershed, not the water. We are concerned about protection of the source and not capacity...that is also important and is being studied to ensure that we have sufficient water supply for all of the things we are doing now and that we plan to do both in Gibsons and in the SCR. D.

Protection of the source focuses on how we collectively manage this watershed and aquifer, our greatest natural asset. How much alteration of the land whether from development, forestry, storm water erosion, population growth, climate change can the land bear before the natural system is impacted? Also, if development is to continue, what kind of development is appropriate on an aquifer or within the watershed; and, how do we control or manage development in order to ensure that decisions made by

one level of government do not effect or impact unknowingly on other levels of government or on the greater community that relies on this water source?

What Legislative, regulatory or bylaw options do we have to protect this area now before any more development occurs?

And perhaps finally, how can we better inform our respective communities that the land that we/they live, work and play on is their drinking water source and that it must be respected?

This morning, after a few presentations that I hope you will find interesting, we will have an opportunity to share and talk together about your concerns, values and ideas for the future.

I hope that as a result of this meeting we will achieve consensus about the need to protect the watershed and aquifer and that some of us will agree to work together to achieve that purpose. I am not sure what that will look like but I know that the right people are in this meeting to make something happen...I look forward to that.