

Re: Our aquifers, Centre Mountain Business Park & Council Action

August 11, 2021

Dear Mayor Ranns, Councillor MacKinnon, and Councillors:

Mayor Ranns, you took immediate steps during this past July 12 Finance and Environment meeting to get up-to-date information on water plans for Centre Mountain Business Park (CMBP). The information you relayed to Council and to the public, from a phone call to Mr. Jim Hartshorne, was that the developers' "intent is to not have any drilling of the aquifer" (zoom recording 3:28:12). You communicated this update during your Mayor's report.

However, the developers appear to be sending mixed messages. In response to a separate request from the APRM to clarify their plans, Mr. Seamus Brennan contradictorily indicated that the plan is to use aquifers and septic instead of CRD water and sewer at CMBP.

In view of this confusing and potentially misleading information from the developers, we hope that members of Council will meet as soon as possible with the developers and other parties to protect Metchosin's interests. We look to you to ensure that the developers of CMBP honour the original terms of the 2017 "Reconciliation Agreement," specifically Section 25 on water/sewage disposal.

As well, we're writing to respectfully request that we be included in any in-person or online meetings. As citizen stakeholders who have been bringing aquifer issues to Council and the community for several years, we feel we have a rich body of knowledge that could be helpful to Council as it takes action to ensure that no drilling of wells or use of on-site septic commences at CMBP.

Lack of provincial Observation Wells and local monitoring

For instance, is Council aware of the absence of any provincial Observation Wells on aquifer #606 and of FLNRO's serious lack of baseline data on the aquifer? Without a single active OBS well in place for years - and thus without any baseline data to guide its granting of non-domestic groundwater licenses - you (Council) have strong grounds for formally requesting of FLNRO and/or the Ministry of Environment that *no groundwater licenses be granted for CMBP until such time as OBS wells have been installed and adequate baseline data has been collected.*

Last week, Kathy Saluke, who has been inquiring about OBS wells for years, received the following email response from FLNRO:

From: "Henderson, Graeme FLNR:EX" <Graeme.Henderson@gov.bc.ca>
Date: August 5, 2021 at 3:30:05 PM PDT
To: "Robinson, Ben FLNR:EX" <Ben.Robinson@gov.bc.ca>, Kathy Saluke <Kathy.Saluke@outlook.com>
Cc: "Barroso, Sylvia L FLNR:EX" <Sylvia.Barroso@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: Observation we'll in aquifer 606

Hi Kathy,

Expanding the Provincial Observation Well Network is a time and budget intensive project that only moves forward as staff and financing are available.

As we are maintaining 82 of the province's 220 observation wells with only myself to complete the work, expanding the network has slowed considerably in our region as the capacity of a single person diminishes.

We recognize that monitoring groundwater is incredibly important, but expanding the network further into aquifer #606 is unlikely for fiscal year 2021-22. Planning, organizing and executing a successful drilling operation takes weeks or months

to complete depending on the complexity of the area and available spots to install a well.

While aquifer #606 is in our list of priority areas for network expansion, there are other locations that also need monitoring and these aquifers may take precedence when time and budgets allow.

Let me know if you have other questions.

Best regards,
Graeme

Again, in view of the above, **Metchosin Council would be justified in requesting that all granting of groundwater licenses at CMBP be suspended until OBS wells are installed and FLNRO has collected sufficient baseline data on the aquifer.** In the report "[British Columbia Drought and Water Scarcity Plan](#)", the province itself calls for both local governments and provincial agencies to prioritize water/groundwater conservation and protection.

Along with the lack of provincial observation wells on aquifer #606, there has been no monitoring of Bilston and other creeks in recent years. Mayor Ranns, you may recall publicly assuring Metchosin residents of the following, at the special council meeting on the land swap held in January 2017:

Paul Kabreakley – Thank you, I really hope to continue to see the trout continue to breed in that stream. It is quite rare to have a local stream that breeds trout like that.

Mayor Ranns – I agree with you and this has been one of our fundamental priorities on this, is the protection of that creek. This Council and all previous Councils have had a commitment to Bilston Creek. That commitment remains. As I've said before, there is going to be an industrial park outside our boundaries anyways, and Langford still has to meet those environmental constraints We have had monitoring stations on there, jointly with ourselves and Langford for many years. **For several years recently we have stopped monitoring, but one of the conditions of this is that we are picking up the monitoring again of both Bilston and Metchosin Creek."**

- ([Minutes of the special council meeting, 2017](#))

Conclusion

Council, in view of both 1) the lack of provincial Observation Wells on aquifer #606 and 2) the commitment in 2017 to re-start monitoring of Bilston and Metchosin Creeks as one of the conditions of the land swap, you are armed with strong rationales for pressing both the provincial government and the developers to pause their groundwater plans.

Finally, your formal request to the province may hold greater force if it comes as a joint submission from Metchosin and Sooke Councils. Hundreds of Sooke residents also depend on aquifer #606 for drinking water and irrigation (see attached image, from [BC Wells map](#)).

In closing, allow us to reiterate our request to be involved in any in-person or online meetings that members of Metchosin Council may be planning with the developers, provincial government representatives, or other stakeholders.

Regards,

Kathy Saluke
Nitya Harris
Nicole Shukin