

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

**Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting
British Columbia's Community Water
Supply Sources**

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REPORT REVEALS UNTOLD HISTORY AND “DIRT” BEHIND MINISTRY OF HEALTH’S TAINTED POLICY ON DRINKING WATER SOURCES

Vancouver – A report released today by community drinking water researcher Will Koop of the B.C. Tap Water Alliance (available on website, above), is a scathing indictment of the government and the Ministry of Health on their failure to impart relevant information from government files and to protect drinking water sources. The report, *Doctoring Our Water: From a Policy of Protection to a Policy of Submission*, is a critical response to the Provincial Health Officer’s annual report for 2000 on Drinking Water Quality in British Columbia, released last November 19, 2001. It details, through many citations from government documents, how medical health officials with the Ministry of Health were once champions of drinking water source protection for a period of many decades. It also reveals how these officials were subsequently and shamefully stripped of their role by senior government administrators and politicians in order to permit the violation against and degradation of drinking water sources, through multiple resource activities such as logging, roadbuilding, mining, and cattle grazing.

“The findings from the Ministry of Health indicate that either the Provincial Health Officer has knowingly failed to impart critical information to the public on the historic role of medical health officers and health engineers to protect drinking water sources, or that he was completely ignorant of it,” says Will Koop, Coordinator of the B.C. Tap Water Alliance. “Either way, the government has failed to account for the rich legacy that the public once had on the protection of drinking water sources. This oversight is inexcusable and discriminatory.”

As a result of dramatic changes to the Ministry of Health as the public’s advocate to protect drinking water sources, the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has capitulated to the terms of government and resource industry politics and pressures. In his report, the PHO chastises “groups” that have recently called for the “protection” of drinking water sources, but fails to point out the contradiction that his Ministry had called upon the same thing for decades.

“The B.C. public needs to regain confidence in the governance over drinking water sources. Given the gravity of the situation, due to the utter irresponsibility by government ministries in their failure to “protect” drinking water resources, there needs to be a formal public inquiry with subpoena powers,” demands Koop. “Over the last few years we have presented the public and the government with adequate evidence for such an inquiry. We can no longer afford to pretend that everything is in order!”

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