



## SMALL WATER USERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Both of the one day workshops for small water systems that our association put on in Nelson and Kamloops last October were very well attended. In total 58 water system representatives (operators/managers/owners/trustees) attended the Nelson workshop, and 55 in Kamloops. We would like to thank all of the presenters as well as Interior Health for their generous support and assistance with planning and delivering the workshops.

For reasons that I do not know, over the past year or so far fewer small systems have contacted me with concerns about addressing demands from their Drinking Water Officer or others within government to comply with treatment requirements or other issues regarding their system. Perhaps this signals a more cooperative or conciliatory approach by the health authorities to the challenges faced by small systems? I do know that Interior Health has significantly revised their small water systems strategy (see page 2) with a particular focus on enhancing outreach and education.

Denny Ross-Smith

## UPCOMING EVENTS (2015)

### British Columbia Water & Waste Association ([www.bcwwa.org](http://www.bcwwa.org)):

- Small Water Systems Symposium, May 27, Kelowna. The cost to attend the SWS Symposium is \$199.00 + tax, making it quite costly for many of the smaller systems. Delegates may also attend the large trade show on May 26/27 at no cost.
- A variety of operator training courses – see their website for a complete list.

### MTS Maintenance Training Services ([www.mtsinc.ca](http://www.mtsinc.ca))

- Various operator training courses at its facility in Vernon, including quite a few specific to small water systems. MTS can also assist small systems with a variety of consulting services on such topics as hazard assessments, emergency response plan development, water meter implementation, etc. A copy of their flyer describing the various courses is enclosed.

## INTERIOR HEALTH AUTHORITY SMALL WATER SYSTEMS STRATEGY

In our last newsletter we referred to Interior Health's efforts to develop a new small water systems strategy. To implement this strategy (we do not know exactly what it is as yet), IHA has put in place a six person Small Water Team.

We believe that this is an excellent initiative, and one that is perhaps long overdue. Attached is a page from a recent IHA report that lists the names of the 6 EHOs responsible for small systems, along with their contact information. For more information on this subject you should contact any of the six directly.

## ARE OUR WATER SYSTEMS AT RISK?

BCWWA and Urban Systems released a report in February 2015 entitled: "Are Our Water Systems at Risk? – Assessing the Financial Stability of BC's Municipal Water and Sewer Systems" The full report is available on the BCWWA website ([www.bcwwa.org](http://www.bcwwa.org)).

Although the study only covered municipalities the results have direct implications to all water systems. I have freely paraphrased some of the findings and recommendations as follows (with a view to their applicability to small systems):

### KEY FINDINGS:

- There is generally a lack of planning for the eventual renewal and replacement of infrastructure
- Water fees are not covering the full cost of services in many communities

- BC municipalities have not set aside sufficient reserve savings to provide a buffer against unexpected changes in operating costs or revenues
- Smaller (municipal) systems have greater financial gaps
- There is a lack of public support for full cost pricing

#### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Adjust water rates to cover the full cost of service
- Develop and implement asset management procedures

Without question many small water systems in BC face the same issues and challenges as the study found for municipal systems, generally exacerbated by lack of scale and by lack of access to federal/provincial infrastructure funding programs. For those members who would like to have a guide to financial planning we suggest that you go to [www.waterbc.ca](http://www.waterbc.ca) and click on 'financial best management practices (BMPs)'

## GLOBAL WATER CONSUMPTION AND PRICING

A 2014 article in Water Canada ([watercanada.net](http://watercanada.net)) entitled "Water Without Borders" discusses Canada's role in water security and offers some interesting statistics. For example municipal (domestic) water consumption in Canada pales in comparison to the volume of water used in thermal power generation. The article also presents some data on global water consumption and cost.

Canada (surprise! surprise!) is the global leader in water consumption (about 325 litres per day per person), followed closely by the United States. Consumption in other countries is far less, for example about 120 l/d in Germany and 125 l/d in Belgium.

The price of water, as you might expect, is pretty much in inverse proportion to consumption. Canada has the lowest cost (about \$0.30/litre)(~\$36.50 per person per year) again followed by the United States. Germany, on the other hand, has the most expensive water at about \$2.16/litre (~\$88.70 per person per year) followed again by Belgium at about \$1.50/litre. Draw your own conclusions!

## BOIL WATER NOTICES AND WATER QUALITY ADVISORIES

Success in significantly reducing the number of boil water notices and water quality advisories continues to elude the provincial government. From April 2014 to April 2015 the total number of boil water notices remained about the same (497 vs. 495), while the number of water quality advisories declined by about 14% (47 vs. 56). Statistics on the reduction of long term boil water notices (as required by the Ombudman) are not easily determined, but clearly progress has been slow.

For those of you who may be interested, the totals by region as of mid April, 2015 were as follows:

<u>Health Authority</u>	<u>Boil Water Notices</u>	<u>Water Quality Advisories</u>
IHA- Kootenays	130	15
IHA – Okanagan	79	13
IHA – Thompson/Cariboo/ Shuswap	169	19
FHA	0	0
VCHA	33	0
NHA	60	1
VIHA	<u>26</u>	<u>0</u>
	497	48

We should note once again that many small surface water systems with inadequate treatment remain unknown to the health authorities, or have not submitted water samples for testing.

## Optimal Purchasing Services

One of our recent affiliate members, Optimal Purchasing Services, offers an unusual service that some of our members may find quite useful. The following is a brief summary of this service for those who may be interested:

For a small water system with limited resources finding the right consultant or contractor to perform work can be daunting. Often people rely on word of mouth or use the first company they find. Most simply don't have the time, experience or the tools to look into other companies or to get multiple quotes and references.

Optimal Purchasing Services can often be of help. They specialize in researching and evaluating merchants and service providers. You only need to explain what you need once and they will take it from there, becoming the single point of contact between you and interested suppliers. Once they've completed their research, you get a list of options and prices, with their pros and cons, making it easier for you to decide who to purchase from. The simple act of going out for additional quotes can lead to significant savings. Making sure they have the right experience and qualifications will reduce your risks and ensure you get better value for money. For more information, please visit [OptimalPurchasing.com](http://OptimalPurchasing.com) or give Georges Guillemot a call at 1-888-657-2389.

## RES'EAU WATERNET

Newsletter readers will remember previous articles on RES'EAU WaterNET, the federally funded, university led research program to address small water system treatment improvements. One of their recent initiatives is a mobile water treatment plant, designed to evaluate various treatment processes in the field.

You can read more about this excellent initiative in the attachment, or you can visit their website at [www.reseauwaternet.ca](http://www.reseauwaternet.ca).

## SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE SOCIETY

In our last newsletter we mentioned the website creation and hosting service for water supply systems introduced by the Sustainable Infrastructure Society. If your water system might be interested in having its own website more information on this service may be found in the attachment to this newsletter.

## NEW AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Our affiliate members include equipment vendors, consulting engineering firms, water test laboratories and reservoir cleaning firms. We appreciate their support for our Association. Each affiliate member has a listing on our website with information about their products or services and we encourage you to take a look at what they have to offer you. You are also welcome to give us a call if you are looking for a particular product or service, since we can usually direct you to the appropriate affiliate member(s) or other companies in your general area.

We would like to welcome the following two new affiliate members to our Association:

MSR Solutions Inc., Victoria  
Optimal Purchasing Services Inc., West Kelowna

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*'Nothing is safer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it'*

-Lao Tzu