

Good morning,

My name is Alex Morrison from the traditional territory of the Syilx people in what we know today as Peachland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am here on behalf of the PEACHLAND WATERSHED PROTECTION ALLIANCE.

I'm a photographer and artist and I have a masters degree in landscape ecology from the University of Manitoba. I moved here two years ago from Winnipeg for the super natural BC experience and the beautiful environment here in the Okanagan.

I don't know if you know Winnipeg's water story. Most people think the water comes from the red river. But its water is too turbid and polluted to drink, and there's not enough fresh ground water to support the city. Over 100 years ago, in a very prescient move, the early city of Winnipeg decided to get its water from a lake 100 miles away in another province, and secure this water source for the future. In doing so unfortunately, they also destroyed a thriving indigenous community. Fast forward to the present, Winnipeg has learned it's tragic lesson and repaired the wrongs done to that community and has still managed to guarantee water security for Winnipeg and the First Nation on whose lands the water comes from.

When I heard about Peachland's water crisis I was excited to volunteer for PWPA. PWPA is a volunteer community registered society based in Peachland. **PWPA's mission is to protect the ecosystem of the watershed and the water it provides including its quality quantity and timing of flow.** Unlike like Vancouver and Victoria our Peachland water source

is NOT protected. Resource extraction and other industrial activities are permitted including industrial logging, logging roads mining, ATVs, cattle ranging, and unregulated recreation and hunting.

Peachland is already experiencing damage to our water cycle from these activities - soil erosion, undrinkable water, flooding, extreme wildfires, frequent droughts, and loss of life wildlife, and salmon are a few of the most visible ones. As a tourist town every one of these impacts has a huge ripple effect on the local economy. For Peachland residents, our home town is under threat of demise, unless we secure the quality, quantity and flow of our water.

PWPA supports a fully funded Watershed Security Fund for all BC community drinking watersheds. The Community of Peachland has already invested \$24 million and counting for an upgraded water treatment plant to deal with the increasing turbidity and sediment caused by unchecked industrial activities in our watershed. With this initiative we have secured our **water quality for now** - as long as the destructive activity in the watershed does not escalate. But with climate change in the mix we cannot be certain that this is a permanent fix.

On-going we need additional funding to repair and secure **the quantity** and timing of flow. This can best be accomplished by restoration and regeneration of the watersheds forests – the source of the water.

We believe that until our watershed has full protection like that enjoyed by Vancouver and Victoria, we need to **immediately** repair our riparian areas, restore the wetlands. We need to plant

deciduous areas for natural firebreaks and to restore rich habitat for wildlife. We need to work closely with Indigenous knowledge keepers and fire keepers, and encourage the implementation and adoption of their traditional ecological knowledge in managing and restoring the forests and in developing new policies to help mitigate climate change.

We are seeking a commitment from the BC Gov, to a dedicated BC Watershed Security Fund with an annual investment of \$75 million until community watersheds in BC are fully protected and the "**unduly**" **clause is removed from the FRPA regulations**. For context, this annual amount represents only 3 water treatment plants like the one in Peachland. According to the BC government website, there are 466 community drinking watersheds in BC.

It's not 1912 anymore and we are not Winnipeg. We cannot just go and find more water. We can not uproot indigenous communities to abscond with their resources. If we fail to protect the Peachland watershed, and any other drinking watersheds in BC we, as communities, will likewise fail.

Let's take another prescient **decision and add water security dollars to the 2022 budget NOW**.

We urge the decision-makers to make this fund a legacy that you can be proud of, and 100 years from now our grandchildren will speak highly of your insight, courage, and wisdom in protecting water in BC - and unlike Winnipeg, the BC Indigenous community will have been the redeemers, whose knowledge and understanding helped make it a success.