

Premier Christy Clark
PO Box 9041 - Station Provincial Government
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Date: _____

Dear Honourable Premier,

I/We live on Texada Island, British Columbia, on the Strait of Georgia.

This island is home to approximately one thousand residents in two main community centers: Gillies Bay and Van Anda; both of which are Improvement Districts whose primary mandate is to provide their residents with safe, potable drinking water.

Over the years, our taxes have increased considerably in an effort to keep up with increasingly stringent Government mandates. Our water system, and the people who run it, are bending over backward to find affordable solutions to the restrictions that your government is imposing, but given the nature and scale of these upgrades, there are no affordable solutions within our reach.

I/We understand that these Government regulations are for safety, as well as in the best interests of the public; however what concerns me is that our Provincial Government will not consider, and has never considered, Improvement Districts for grants or financial support. Why is this?

Why is our provincial government neglecting residents of small communities like ours, and forcing us to settle for sub-standard water quality (which you deem unsafe), with no resources to fix it?

Your government recently published a News Release, on your own website, dated October 17, 2012 with the headline: "B.C. Government helps with Sicamous water solution". The BC Government provided \$50,000 toward a pilot project to address drinking water problems caused largely by turbidity, in the hopes of improving their water quality. What makes Sicamous more important than the rest of us?

This year Gillies Bay's water system was on a boil water advisory for over three months; this is not the exception – it is becoming the rule. Every year, we experience the same boil water advisories and water quality issues. We also face an ongoing problem with Trihalomethanes (THMs) which we were advised of in December of 2010, yet still cannot afford to rectify.

The Gillies Bay Improvement District has recently announced that after completing a financial study which includes an Asset Replacement Schedule and Five Year Plan, they have no choice but to increase taxes by \$445.00 per year in order to simply fund asset renewal and replacement (of existing infrastructure) over the next 25 years. This is a 300% increase that doesn't even begin to address our water quality issues! Our community, and others like us, cannot afford these rate increases, and our District cannot afford to make the mandated upgrades and improvements without them.

So, we want to know what our Provincial Government is going to do help us? It is positively irresponsible for the government to turn a blind eye to this widespread collapsing infrastructure problem which affects almost every community in BC, and leaves over 250 small communities in BC with no access to funding. What do we have to do to get a little help, like Sicamous did? Is the Premier willing to follow through on her commitments to all of us?

We have been told that in the past, Improvement Districts were not eligible for grants and financial support because they were not as financially accountable or responsible as Regional Districts, Municipalities, etc. That has changed in recent years. Improvement Districts are required to complete a yearly audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Improvement District must also comply with the requirement for the PSAB-3150 for Tangible Capital Assets. Many Districts, like ours, are utilizing the same engineers, consultants and industry professionals as the Regional Districts and Municipalities. So tell me, what is the difference now, between them and us?

If anything, given our transparent nature and small scale financial structure, I would challenge that Improvement Districts are *more* accountable and *more* responsible than many other levels of government. We may lack the purchasing power and access to debt financing that municipal and regional governments have, but that can be rectified.

In closing, I propose that Premier Christy Clark make the following changes to correct this current system of unequal and substandard support for small communities like ours:

1. Change the Local Government Act in such a way as to put Improvement Districts on the same footing as Municipalities and Regional Districts, and thereby allow Improvement Districts to pursue and obtain two-thirds matching grants.
2. Help Improvement Districts gain access to affordable insurance and debt financing options, similar to that which Regional Districts and Municipalities utilize.
3. Help small communities, including Improvement Districts, gain access to affordable purchasing and procurement of services and equipment; similar to what is currently in place via the Ministry of Citizen's Services – Procurement and Supply Services. This could *also* be done by creating relationships between Improvement Districts and nearby Municipalities and/or Regional Districts, to help small communities save money on the purchase of expensive equipment, by utilizing a 'bulk buying' strategy which is currently outside of the scope of their small operations. The Provincial Government would likely have to encourage Regional Districts and Municipalities to cooperate.

We ask that this be done with a sense of immediacy, as every day our system deteriorates further and the risks of a Walkerton-style health emergency becomes a reality. We are a mining community which adds many millions of dollars to the provincial economy. Other Improvement Districts are in similar positions and are similarly valuable to the province, but we need your help.

Sincerely,

(Full Legal Name)

(Civic Address)

(City)

(Province)

(Postal Code)

(Full Legal Name)

(Civic Address)

(City)

(Province)

(Postal Code)