



March 10, 2020

Dear Minister Farnworth:

Thank you for responding to Rhona Martin, CSRD Chair, regarding issues related to Newsome Creek, January 2020. Newsome Creek Watershed Action Group (NCWAG) has had a chance to review the letter. We want to address some items and re-state the urgency of the situation.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development (FLNRORD) and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) have been consulted and have offered you their recommendations. Our difficulty with their recommendations is FLNRORD and MOTI are big contributors to the problems of erosion in Newsome Creek.

FLNRORD stated at two public meetings in Sorrento they were aware of the effects of the 2009 Black Mountain fire on the landscape, that the fire created a wax-like coating on the surface which directly contributed to higher run off. They went on to say the hydrology of the mountain section of the watershed has been compromised because there are no longer tree roots to absorb the spring run off. They said they planted trees on the mountain, but burn maps reveal they planted only 2% of the area.

FLNRORD knew from day one that high levels of run off would occur, yet they chose to do nothing and accept that large amounts of water would be flowing into our community each spring. This inaction has caused significant damage to the creek, roads, properties and water quality, and its ensured higher run off levels for the future.

MOTI stated at a public meeting in 2019 that all the culverts are undersized and they plan on replacing each one from the lake to the top of Notch Hill, not just the ones at Dieppe Road and Highway 1. The Kerr Wood Leidal Engineering study, to which you referred, stated that because the culvert at Highway 1 was undersized it increased the flow of water coming out of the culvert. It essentially turned the out-take of the culvert into a pressure washer that scoured the bank below causing significant sloughing, and major damage to the structure of the ravine. This culvert has caused much of the damage below Highway 1.

MOTI has paid many thousands of dollars over the years to send backhoes and dump trucks to dig out clogged culverts on Notch Hill in the spring. They've hauled away gravel that was being washed down the ever deteriorating stream bed. Local reports say they simply hauled it back up the mountain where it washed back down the next spring.

FLNRORD and MOTI have had many chances to do something constructive. Instead they've consistently underachieved, and we're paying the cost.

There's no neutral ground in this situation. Inaction is destructive and it's causing more danger.

- Children are walking to and from school daily along Highway 1. Below them the bank drops straight down 30 feet to the creek. MOTI has put no guard rail or fence near the creek to protect them from falling in.
- Trees continue to fall in the ravine taking land mass with them. Things have progressed to a point where the freeze thaw effect is causing sloughing earlier and earlier in the year. We didn't have this problem before, but so much erosion has occurred that the soil has been exposed and is vulnerable to frost where it wasn't in the past.
- Numerous Boil Water Advisories have been issued by the CSRD due to the silts releasing into the lake and water intake. Terry Langlois, team leader of facilities at CSRD said that *"normally Sorrento's water reads 0.2 NTU, and it's not uncommon to rise to 0.8 in a freshet. A Water Quality Advisory is posted at 1, and a Boil Water Advisory is posted at 5. In the freshets of 2017 and 2018 the readings were 10, and they would have been significantly higher but the nephelometer only goes to 10."*
- Businesses continue to struggle and loose income. Sheryl Willson says, *"My husband and I run a pottery business from our home. Our studio is one of the buildings in danger. The erosion of our property is undermining the ground where our studio sits, which is undermining how we make our living. For the last two summers we have been living with the stress of being on evacuation alert. Having to be prepared to leave at a moments notice has caused great interruption to how we work and run our business."*
- Property values and quality of life are in decline. Barb Berg says, *"We moved here fourteen years ago to enjoy retirement and Shuswap Lake. The first years were great but the last four years has been stressful as the bank behind the house is eroding because of increased water flow in Newsome Creek. Our grandchildren come every year to enjoy the Shuswap. Our children are deserving of an inheritance. The BC Government needs to repair the creek bank so that we may remain on our property. Please expedite the repairs before its too late!!!"*
- Imminent danger threatens our safety. This years' snow pack is 130% and the water laden snow is so densely packed that long time residents of Notch Hill say this could be the worst spring melt we've seen to date. Cool temperatures have held most of the snow on the mountain and flash flooding is a real possibility. In 2017 the Highway 1 culvert clogged and was so full that water levels in the 30 foot deep ravine came within two feet of cresting the Trans-Canada. If this were to happen this year road failure could send a massive wave of water down the ravine through the residential area.

Minister Farnworth, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District has recommended a solution that we support.

MOTI is scheduled to start work on the Highway 1 and the Dieppe Road crossings. There are about 400 meters of creek between those two points where homes are in danger, where MOTI could make a continuous repair on the creek corridor. Kerr Wood Leidal Engineering has submitted a report recommending a variety of mitigation/repair works for this exact area, and the estimated costs were included. MOTI is well placed to do this work while they're in the creek replacing the culverts. We expect the province to seize this opportunity.

In June 2019 Deputy Minister Lori Halls attended the site. We understand she reported what she saw first hand directly to you, and recommended something be done. We ask you now to respond and act immediately on a solution that's readily available.

The provincial government not only has the responsibility for taking the lead in this urgent and life-threatening issue, as noted in numerous reports and previous communications; but the provincial government has the opportunity with the re-building of the Dieppe Road and Highway 1 culverts to implement a proper solution.

We don't need another bandage solution that will be ripped off in the spring freshet. Please take up the opportunity presented by the re-building of the culverts to move towards a lasting and effective solution to the serious and pressing issues along Newsome Creek.

Sincerely,

Newsome Creek Watershed Action Group
Sorrento, BC

cc; Claire Trevana, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
Greg Kylo, MLA, Shuswap
Paul Demenok, Area C Director, CSRD
Mel Arnold, MP, North Okanagan - Shuswap