

## **TOUGHER RULES SAFEGUARD PROVINCE'S DRINKING WATER**

VICTORIA – New measures governing drinking water will better protect the health and safety of British Columbians. The amended Drinking Water Protection Act and regulations came into force May 16, 2003.

With the new legislation, government fulfils its New Era commitment to improve the quality of British Columbia's drinking water. The changes establish a comprehensive and co-ordinated framework for protecting the province's drinking water from source to tap.

Under the new drinking water legislation, the province has increased the basic expectations around assessing water systems, certifying operators and suppliers, and monitoring and reporting on water quality. Improving standards at all levels of water supply will ensure safe, reliable and accessible drinking water for all British Columbians.

Twenty new drinking-water officers – health officials employed by the regional health authorities – will be appointed across B.C. Drinking water officers are dedicated positions created under the act to ensure the water British Columbians drink is safe.

The legislation gives drinking-water officers increased powers to protect water sources from contamination by any drinking-water health hazard. In addition, the drinking-water officers will oversee a source-to-tap assessment of every drinking-water system in the province to address all potential risks to human health.

These health officials will ensure water quality is maintained through operating permits developed specifically for each water system. The permits specify monitoring requirements for all substances of concern in a particular water system. In addition, the regulations require all water-system operators to be certified under the environmental operators certification program.

The new regulatory framework was based on extensive consultation with the public, stakeholders and experts in the field. A government-appointed groundwater advisory board and drinking-water review panel also provided advice on amending the legislation and developing regulations.

In June 2002, an action plan for safe drinking water was announced to modernize drinking-water protection in British Columbia. The Drinking Water Protection Act was subsequently amended, but it required regulations to bring it into force. The new act and regulations replace the Safe Drinking Water Regulation under the Health Act.

The Drinking Water Protection Act and regulations are available on-line at, respectively, [www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/D/01009\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/D/01009_01.htm) and [www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/D/200\\_2003.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/D/200_2003.htm).

During the transition period, medical health officers will act as interim drinking water officers until other health officials are formally appointed to these roles. To contact the local medical health officer, look for Health Protection under Health Authorities in the blue pages of the telephone directory.

Visit the province's Web site at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/> for online information and services.

Media        Public Affairs Bureau  
contact:    Ministry of Health Services/Planning  
              250 952-1887