



Reference: 405051

November 21, 2023

Their Worship Mayor Rob Douglas
and Councillors
Municipality of North Cowichan
7030 Trans-Canada Highway
Duncan BC V9L 6A1

Sent via email: mayor@northcowichan.ca

Dear Mayor Douglas and Council:

Thank you for your letter of October 18, 2023, regarding the meeting on August 23, 2023, to discuss funding support for the remediation of blue-green algae blooms in Quamichan Lake.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Municipality of North Cowichan to manage water quality and algae blooms in Quamichan Lake. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (the ministry) does not provide funding to support the establishment and maintenance of oxygenation or aeration systems. Generally, these projects are considered municipal infrastructure and thus the responsibility of municipalities. The Provincial contribution to the Elk Lake project is not typical of Provincial funding.

We recommend that the Municipality of North Cowichan follow up with the Real Estate Foundation's Heathy Watersheds Initiative (HWI). The Province provided the HWI with a \$100 million grant as part of the establishment of the Watershed Security Fund, and this grant is considered independent from government funding. We would suggest engaging with the HWI to discuss specific criteria for funding, which is being developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities. More information on the HWI can be found at <https://www.healthywatersheds.ca/>.

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The ministry continues to monitor and report on Quamichan Lake water quality and algal communities as part of the B.C. Lake Monitoring Network. Additional data and information related to Quamichan Lake water quality can be accessed at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/lake-monitoring>. We also encourage concerned citizens to report harmful algae blooms to the ministry through the Algae Watch website at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/algaewatch>.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G. Heyman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'G' being particularly large and stylized.

George Heyman
Minister

cc: Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Terri Brennan, Executive Coordinator, District of North Cowichan

October 18, 2023

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister

Re: Meeting with North Cowichan Staff to Discuss Funding Support for Remediation of Blue Green Algae Blooms in Quamichan Lake

As a follow-up to our meeting on 23 August 2023, I am writing to thank you for your time and provide a summary of the discussion and the action items arising from the meeting.

Our desire is to work with the Ministry to leverage the monitoring and assessment work that North Cowichan has conducted over the past five years to develop a Blue-Green Algae remediation plan for Quamichan Lake. Specifically, in the coming months, we will be engaging an environmental professional to assess the efficacy of aeration as a water quality remediation tool for the lake and the associated operating costs of such a system. We also seek advice on the potential benefits and costs of other water quality remediation options should aeration be deemed unlikely to succeed in Quamichan Lake.

North Cowichan currently monitors and assesses water quality in Quamichan Lake, including temperature, oxygen, nutrients, and the phytoplankton community. We believe that this information provides a sound basis upon which an assessment can be conducted to provide advice on effective remediation and management options for Quamichan Lake. To that end, North Cowichan has set aside a reserve fund (currently at 500,000 and accruing at \$100,000 per year) to help fund the water quality infrastructure and its operating costs once in place.

As you know, Rowing Canada Aviron (RCA) has selected Quamichan Lake as the location for their National Training Center, and we have been collaborating with them on improving water quality on the lake. RCA staff has supported our research and monitoring of the lake, and we continue to work with the RCA medical team to help educate athletes and training staff on best practices for working on the lake during algae blooms. RCA staff and North Cowichan Environment staff are also collaborating on our goals of setting up an aeration assessment and implementing a water remediation plan once the infrastructure has been put in place.



North Cowichan also emphasizes the value and importance of Quamichan Lake to our neighbour, Cowichan Tribes, as a place they regard as having significant cultural value. Our remediation plan will necessarily involve engagement and collaboration with Cowichan Tribes on monitoring and managing water quality in the lake to help restore the traditional values and services it provides.

Given the environmental, social, and economic benefits that would accrue from improving water quality on Quamichan Lake, we hope you support this work. This project aligns with the ministry's goals of "...effective protection, management and conservation of BC's water..." and leading "...work on climate preparedness and adaptation..." Blue-green algae blooms are regarded as likely to increase in magnitude and duration as climate change progresses in the coming decades. The Ministry has supported similar work in Elk Lake, and we believe that the environmental, social, and economic benefits of that investment would be matched by participation in the work in Quamichan Lake.

Thank you for considering our situation and for the time of Director Finkelstein in working to help North Cowichan address the Blue-Green Algae question in Quamichan Lake.

Sincerely,



Rob Douglas
Mayor

mayor@northcowichan.ca

cc: David Conway, Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services, North Cowichan
Terry Dillon, Chief Executive Office, Rowing Canada Aviron
Ben Finkelstein Director, Partnerships, Climate Partnerships and Engagement Branch
North Cowichan Council
Ted Swabey, Chief Administrative Officer, North Cowichan