

# Introducing: The British Columbia Ground Water Association



By Remi Allard, M. Eng., P. Eng.

*On behalf of the executive,* directors and members of the BC Ground Water Association (BCGWA), I extend warmest wishes to the membership of BCWWA and look forward to our continued collaboration with your association. This being the first ground water related article contributed by BCGWA, it is fitting to begin by introducing our organization and to elaborate on our growing relationship with BCWWA.

For many years, British Columbia was the only province in Canada where water well drillers were not united by some form of association. There are a number of reasons why this was so, the primary one being that there were no provincial regulations concerning ground water. There was also a belief that an abundance of surface water existed and that few people found it necessary to dig or drill a well. Even where ground water was used, most demand was met with simple dug wells. Furthermore, many people considered well drilling a very risky venture and engaged a well driller as a last resort. To some extent, this was justified because, in the early years, well drillers were not very skilled and high failure rates were not uncommon.

The reliance on ground water began to change in the 1960s, when the rural life style became more popular and the general public became more aware of water-borne diseases. This resulted in drilling companies establishing thriving businesses near centers of population. Communication between competing drillers was practically non-existent; it was more an atmosphere of benign toleration. No one shared their well information, much less their drilling secrets. Everyone conceded that a drilling association would be a good thing, if it could somehow get started. The province provided the impetus by introducing Bill 43 in early 1970, which stated that no wells would be drilled in BC without first obtaining a permit. Well drillers were furious, as this was considered an intrusion on the freedom enjoyed by the trade.

With some support from Jay Lehr, the Executive Director of the National Ground Water Association (USA), a group of 26 people (not all drillers – there weren't that many in the province) attended the first meeting in June 1970 of what was to become the British Columbia Well Drilling Association. The primary objective of the new association was to find

solutions to the common problems experienced by the drilling community and to provide an effective voice in shaping provincial legislation. In the early days, everything was done on a volunteer basis and the wives of the drillers were the real bosses.

The name of the association was changed in 1993 to the British Columbia Ground Water Association, as it was felt this more accurately described the changing interests of the organization. Having said this, from the beginning, the objectives of the association, as stated in its articles of incorporation, are the following:

- To place the water well contracting business on a scientific and business-like basis;
- To maintain an organization to assist, promote, encourage and support the interest and welfare of the water well industry in the province;
- To foster and promote scientific education, standards, research and techniques in order to improve the methods of water well construction;
- To promote and encourage harmony and co-operation between members and government agencies, relative to the proper development and protection of the underground water

supply, and to generally advance the mutual interest of those engaged in the water well industry in their own and the public interest.

Over the years, the association has grown to include some 250 members, representing not only water well drillers, but also geotechnical and geo-exchange drillers, pump installers, hydrogeologists, water purveyors who rely on ground water, and technical people from all levels of government. We host an annual conference and trade show; we correspond regularly with government regarding the ongoing development of regulations related to ground water; we provide various types of training to our membership; and, of course, we correspond with other water-related organizations in the province, such as the BCWWA.

Please take the time to visit the BCGWA website and explore the useful links relating to ground water. The website is located at [www.bcgwa.org](http://www.bcgwa.org).

For some time, we have been corresponding with the BCWWA Board towards strengthening the relationship between our organizations and increasing the collective ability of all water-related associations in British Columbia to deliver a consistent message regarding water and ground water.

We are now exploring the merits of having cross-representation at the executive level between BCWWA and BCGWA. We are also looking at coordinated training and workshop opportunities. The most promising of these shared initiatives is a proposed dialogue on Groundwater Under the Direct Influence of Surface Water (GUDI) between our associations and the Ministries of Health and Environment.

In closing, our association is looking forward to successfully pursuing opportunities with BCWWA that will benefit the water and ground water industry in British Columbia. 💧



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