



## AUDITOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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# BACKGROUND

August 21, 2019

### **Township of Langley Performance Audit Report**

#### **WHAT WE AUDITED**

- This performance audit was on the topic, “*Local Government’s Role in Ensuring Clean Drinking Water.*”
- We reviewed the Township of Langley’s governance of its drinking water operations as well as its management of drinking water-related infrastructure and operations and its supply and demand management activities.
- We did not audit drinking water services in the region provided by Metro Vancouver or private water purveyors.
- We included the Township along with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and the City of Kelowna in audits on this topic. These auditees were chosen because they represent different forms of local government in different regions, each facing drinking water challenges.
- The audit covered the period January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2018.
- The report covers three of the four audit objectives that we examined in the Township of Langley. A fourth (asset management planning and water supply infrastructure) will be covered in a separate complementary report to be issued in the near future.

#### **WHY WE CHOSE THIS TOPIC**

- The well-being of every British Columbian – and every B.C. community – depends on access to clean drinking water.
- Sound environmental management concerns all local governments and how they ensure this is a growing area of challenge affecting public health and safety.

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- In many communities, it is local government that plans for, sources, where necessary treats and delivers drinking water to its residents.
- It is important that local governments effectively manage their water systems to ensure drinking water availability, safety and reliability over the long term.

### **UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE AUDIT**

- This performance audit topic was one of the most complex undertaken by the office to date, as it involved review of organization-wide governance and activities as well as a detailed assessment of the management of water systems.
- The three audit objectives covered by this report each required detailed examination by the performance audit team and a great deal of cooperation by the Township and its staff. As a result, the performance audit report is substantial.
- The Township of Langley faces a unique situation in delivering drinking water, due to its dependence on five district water systems operating 19 public wells that draw on groundwater, as well as water purchased from the Greater Vancouver Water District.

### **WHAT WE FOUND**

- The Township of Langley met most of the expectations included in our audit objectives and had made considerable effort to ensure the sustainability of its drinking water.
- There were a few areas where we identified opportunities for improvements to help the Township ensure successful drinking water planning and management in the future.

#### **Supporting Clean and Safe Drinking Water Where and When Needed**

- The Township had focused resources on gaining a sophisticated understanding of its ground-water resources and identifying risks and issues related to them.
- The Township used this knowledge in its strategic planning and decision making and had a governance structure that supported providing clean and safe drinking water.
- The Township had not developed a Council-endorsed strategy or policies on drinking water sources, although work was underway on supply development options.

#### **Management to Meet Demand**

- The Township of Langley demonstrated numerous efforts to manage drinking water to meet current and anticipated future demand.

- The Township lacked an integrated water conservation and demand management plan with identified measures and overall water reduction targets and had not evaluated the effectiveness of its conservation activities.

### **Ensuring Safety and Reliability**

- The Township of Langley had necessary health authority approvals and its water system employees were trained to the required certification levels. The Township also had a cross connection control program and a systematic preventative maintenance program.
- The Township reported no microbiological health risks in its source well water and did not have any water quality advisories or unplanned water system shutdowns during the period covered by the audit.

### **WHAT WE RECOMMEND**

- We have made 12 recommendations aimed at helping the Township of Langley ensure the success of its drinking water planning and management into the future.
- Our recommendations cover a range of areas:
  - **Integrated water planning and management** – Seven recommendations in areas of drinking water sources, full cost recovery, risk management, workflow and data collection, analysis, reporting and record-keeping.
  - **Conduct policies, internal communications and engagement** – Two recommendations dealing with human resource policies and employee engagement.
  - **Other areas** – Three recommendations on emergency and business continuity planning, water quality reporting and water conservation and demand management.

### **ABOUT THE AGLG**

- This is the third performance audit report issued by the office of the AGLG on this topic. In 2017 and 2018, the office released reports on water systems operated by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and City of Kelowna, respectively.
- Since its establishment, the office has released audit reports on six different topics, covering local governments in all regions of the province.

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