

June 13, 2024

Auditor General Office of British Columbia  
623 Fort Street,  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
V8W 1G1

**Re: Request for audit regarding cost overruns of Metro Vancouver wastewater treatment plant project in North Vancouver**

Dear Michael Pickup,

We are writing to bring to your attention concerns regarding significant cost overruns associated with a major wastewater treatment plant project located in North Vancouver.

British Columbia taxpayers have already provided over \$200M in funding for this project. As this project is funded in part by the Province of British Columbia, we are of the opinion this infrastructure project falls within the scope of your office.

It is worth noting the wastewater treatment plant was originally scheduled to cost regional, provincial and federal taxpayers approximately \$700M. Due to reasons not revealed to the public, this has now ballooned to almost \$4B. In terms of percentage, this is likely the largest single budget overrun of a public infrastructure project in the history of British Columbia.

As elected officials within our respective cities, we believe it is imperative to ensure accountability and transparency in the management of public funds, particularly in major infrastructure projects of such critical importance to public health and environmental sustainability. This is of particular importance given the project is partly being funded by the Province of British Columbia.

Recently the Board of Metro Vancouver approved a tax increase of \$590 per year for the next 30 years for all North Shore ratepayers. In addition, all Metro Vancouver rate payers are also being forced to pay increased taxes to cover the projected cost overruns. So as you can see, this will negatively impact the affordability of countless numbers of Lower Mainland residents for decades to come.

The purpose of this letter is to request an audit or investigation into the financial management and oversight of the aforementioned wastewater treatment plant project. Specifically, we are concerned about three key areas which include:

1. **Lack of Transparency:** There appears to be a distinct lack of transparency regarding the reasons behind the cost overruns and how taxpayer funds are being utilized in the project. A special task force was appointed by Metro Vancouver Chair George Harvie to review this

project. It was provided with information regarding what triggered the cost overruns, however, due to a confidentiality agreement, they are not allowed to speak to the media or the public.

2. **Accountability:** It is essential to hold responsible parties, whether they are public officials, contractors, or other stakeholders, accountable for any mismanagement or negligence that may have contributed to the cost overruns.

3. **Impact on Public Resources:** Cost overruns in public projects can strain limited resources and lead to budgetary constraints in other vital areas, affecting the overall well-being of Metro Vancouver cities.

Given the magnitude of the concerns surrounding this project, we respectfully urge your office to conduct a thorough audit or investigation into the financial aspects of the wastewater treatment plant project. Such an inquiry would provide much-needed clarity and assurance to the public regarding the responsible use of taxpayer funds and the efficient management of critical infrastructure projects.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that your office will take appropriate action to address these concerns in a timely and effective manner. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information or assistance regarding this issue.

Please note that we are writing to you as individual elected officials and that are not necessarily representing the views of our respective city councils. Thank you for your dedication to upholding accountability and transparency in public administration.

Sincerely,

Coun. Linda Annis, City of Surrey

Coun. Mike Bose, City of Surrey

Coun. Daniel Fontaine, City of New Westminster

Coun. Kash Heed, City of Richmond

Coun. Richard T. Lee, City of Burnaby

Coun. Paul Minhas, City of New Westminster

Coun. Ahmed Yousef, City of Maple Ridge