

# Slater retains involvement in provincial water issues

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By [Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News](#)

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Boundary-Similkameen MLA John Slater has been appointed a special advisor for water stewardship in B.C., after the position of parliamentary secretary for water was dropped from Premier Christy Clark's new cabinet following her election as leader of the B.C. Liberal party.

Slater admits he found that frustrating, but found after discussing it with new environment minister Terry Lake and the premier that it was a misunderstanding of where the Water Act Modernization process was at, rather than a move to cut the process short.

Now, Slater said, "we will continue with the Water Act consultations throughout the province."

He said his goal is to give the public and stakeholders an opportunity to have a look at the draft of the new act, after it has gone to cabinet, but before it goes to the legislature for debate.

Slater said the premier wants an open consultative process, and this way would achieve that, even though it's never been done with new legislation before.

First Nations people wanted more time to review the proposed legislative changes, and he said this process could take up to a year from today to be completed, which would give them more opportunity to review it.

"We don't want to rush it. That's happened before. It's too important," he commented.

Slater is a former chairman of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and former mayor of Osoyoos, and admits he is passionate about water.

"I want to contribute what I can," he said.

Currently, staff are looking at all the thousands of bits of information submitted by the public in the past three months, during the public consultation phase of gathering information in

preparation for the drafting of a new Water Act. The current act was brought into law a century ago.

Next, staff will draft a new act for submission to cabinet for discussion.

That will then go back to the stakeholders and public for comment, be re-drafted if senior staff feel that's needed, before being returned to cabinet.

Slater felt a period of 30 to 90 days would be allowed for public comment on the draft.

Clark's decision to drop the position of parliamentary secretary for water from cabinet was criticized by members of the OBWB during its monthly meeting earlier this week.

They decided to have staff write a letter to her, asking that the position be reinstated.

Board members weren't aware at the time that the premier had appointed Slater as a special advisor for water stewardship.

***[jsteeves@kelownacapnews.com](mailto:jsteeves@kelownacapnews.com)***

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