Reference: 50769

July 15, 2026

VIA EMAIL:

Dear , and :

Thank you for your emails regarding Lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 within the Stepping Stones community and your concerns about aquifer 1153 and area water rights. I note several emails received either by my office or by colleagues on June 10, June 14, June 22, and June 29. As Executive Director of Water Management for the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), I am asked to respond.

As noted previously, the Comptroller of Water Rights' authority under the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) relates to the diversion, use, and storage of water from streams and aquifers, and the regulation of the works needed for the proper diversion of that water. I will respond to your water-related questions within the jurisdiction of the Provincial government and the WSA. Any other correspondence received will be kept on file within the Comptroller of Water Rights office.

Aquifer 1153 – Based on provincial information, the general Stepping Stones community area does not overlay aquifer 1153; specifically lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 within the Stepping Stones community are not underlain by Aquifer 1153. Further, there is no provincially mapped aquifer underlying Lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 at all. A map showing the location of Aquifer 1153 relative to Lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 is attached for reference.

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Water, Fisheries and Coast
Mailing Address:
PO BOX 9367 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9L6
Tel: 778-698-3290
Website:www.gov.bc.ca/WLRS

Water Licence 503054 – Based on our water rights database, water licence 503054 referenced in your correspondence is appurtenant to land north of the Stepping Stones community, in or near the city of Armstrong. Information on this and other water licences can be found through the public water licensing system.

Historic Water Rights in the Stepping Stone Area – In British Columbia, under the *WSA*, rights to water are appurtenant to land. Water rights are not a separate fee simple right. As land ownership or use is transferred or changes, existing water rights are conveyed with the land. Individuals or entities, including local governments, only hold rights to water as long as they have access to the land, either through ownership or through access under legislation, such as to Crown land under the *Land Act,* or directive through an Order in Council. In the case of a water utility such as Greater Vernon Water Utility, they are a purveyor of water; the appurtenant land associated with the licence is tied to the service area where water is purveyed. This is the foundation of the *Water Sustainability Act* and the previous *Water Act* of 1909.

Water licences in the Stepping Stones community – The Water Management Branch of WLRS maintains the database with records for all water rights in the province. According to WLRS records, there are no parcels of land with associated water rights – historic or otherwise – under the *Water Sustainability Act* in the Stepping Stones community. For the Stepping Stones community:

- The water licences authorizing diversion and use are held by the Regional District of North Okanagan (Greater Vernon Water Utility) and are appurtenant to the service area boundaries the utility services.

- The Province authorizes volumes of water from specific sources and the associated works. The distribution system and all associated infrastructure, including operation and maintenance, are the responsibility of the licensee, in this case, the Greater Vernon Water Utility.

As noted in my letter of June 4, 2026, the issues you raise are largely within the purview of local governments. Matters related to conveyance infrastructure, cross-connection requirements, historic canals and associated covenants, and local servicing are within the jurisdiction of the Regional District of North Okanagan, Greater Vernon Water Utility, and/or the Township of Spallumcheen, and they are best positioned to respond.

As noted above, for future correspondence, we will continue to respond to correspondence where there are questions within provincial jurisdiction only. Again, thank you for writing and sharing your concerns.

Sincerely,

Connie Chapman
Executive Director, Water Management

Attachment: Figure 1: Location of Aquifer 1153 relative to Lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 (Stepping Stones community)

pc: Michael Toews, Director of Authorizations, Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship
Harwinder Sandhu, MLA, Vernon-Lumby (Harwinder.Sandhu.MLA@leg.bc.ca)
David Williams, MLA, Salmon Arm-Shuswap (David.Williams.MLA@leg.bc.ca)
The Corporation of the Township of Spallumcheen (mail@spallumcheen.bc.ca)
Regional District of North Okanagan Utilities (utilities@rdno.ca)
City of Vernon (administration@vernon.ca)
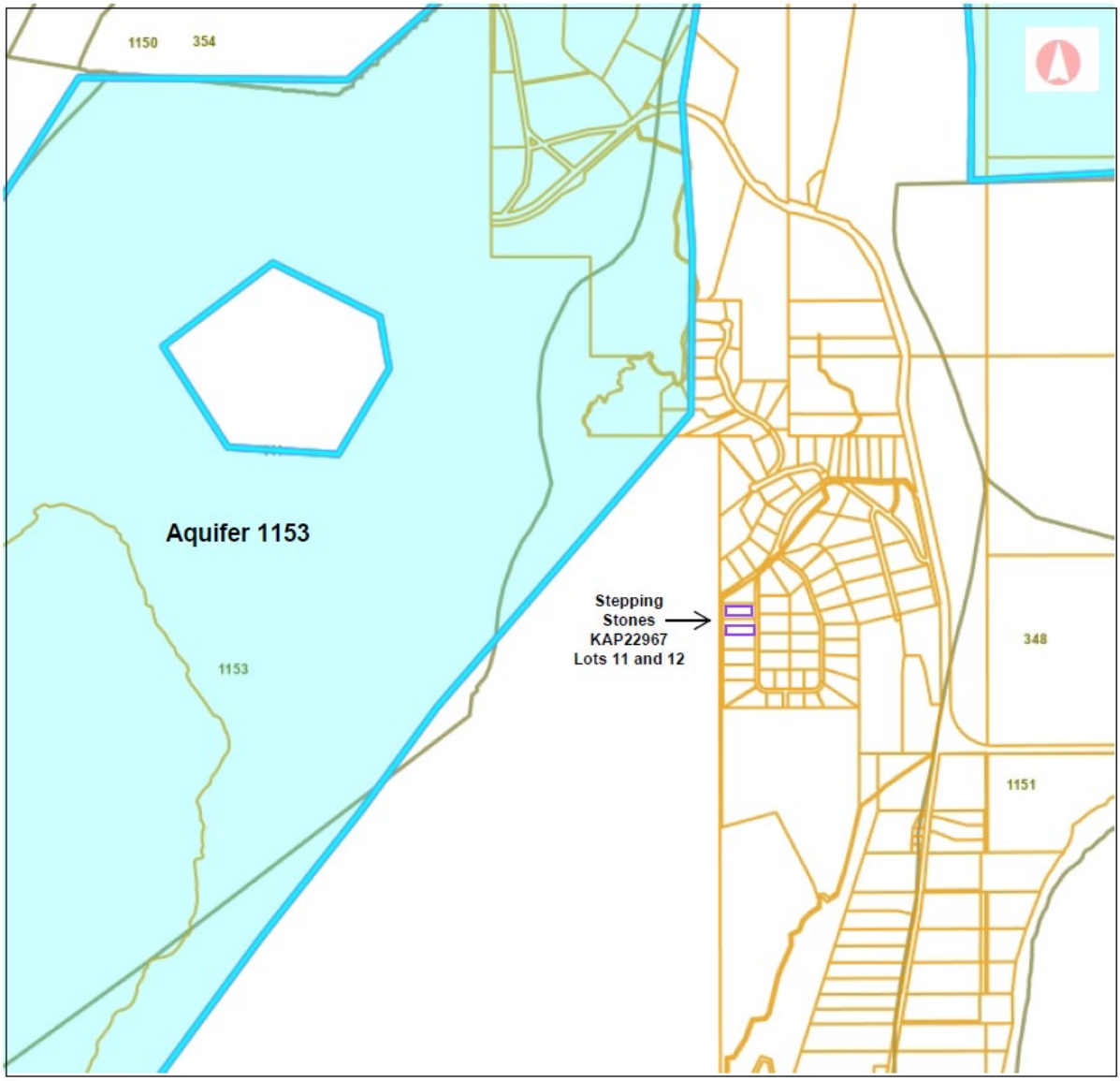
Figure 1: Location of Aquifer 1153 relative to Lots 11 and 12, Plan KAP22967 (Stepping Stones community). The mapped boundary of Aquifer 1153 does not underly the subject properties.