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Statement on Prince Rupert Local State of Emergency: Local politicians should address community at city-run public forum

(PRINCE RUPERT, BC) People for Public Infrastructure, a recently formed community organization advocating for the city's water system, released the following statement in response to today's City of Prince Rupert's declaration of a Local State of Emergency:

“Today's emergency declaration reflects what residents and businesses have known for years. It's not news that our public water system is in urgent need of repair,” said Tom Kertes, community organizer of People for Public Infrastructure. “That's why we need to all work together to fix it.”

“Calling for more provincial support to ensure that we can fix the immediate crisis makes sense. But the city can't stop there. Local government has waited too long to publicly engage city residents on the development of a comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of our public water system. In light of today's emergency declaration, one thing that many local politicians, at all levels of government, can do is revisit their decisions to not attend the planned Community Forum on the the water system, scheduled for January 21,” said Kertes. “Let's talk alternatives and plans together, so we can get this fixed for the long-term.”

People for Public Infrastructure has already invited the mayor, the entire city council, the local MLA, and the local MP to speak on alternatives and plans for fixing the water system at the forum. So far, only four local politicians have replied, with all declining to speak on a panel at the forum. (One city councilor said they would attend the forum but would not speak on a panel and another said they may attend but did not commit.) The intent of the forum is to bring all voices to one table, so alternatives and plans can be developed in the open.

“Given that we are now in a local state of emergency, it seems like a good time for local politicians to speak directly to residents about solutions, alternatives, and plans for fixing the issue. That's why we invited them to our forum. Local politicians should reconsider and attend. Better yet, the city should hold its own forum so that even more people would attend. People for Public Infrastructure would gladly give up our date to take part in a city-run public forum instead of hosting our own,” said Kertes.

“With water main breakages on the rise, frequent boil water and water advisory notices, including an over forty-day notice in the not too distant past, and the city government's own warnings that public investments are needed, the declaration of an emergency reflects an urgent need for the whole community work together to protect our public infrastructure,” said Kertes.

<https://peopleforpublicinfrastructure.org/>