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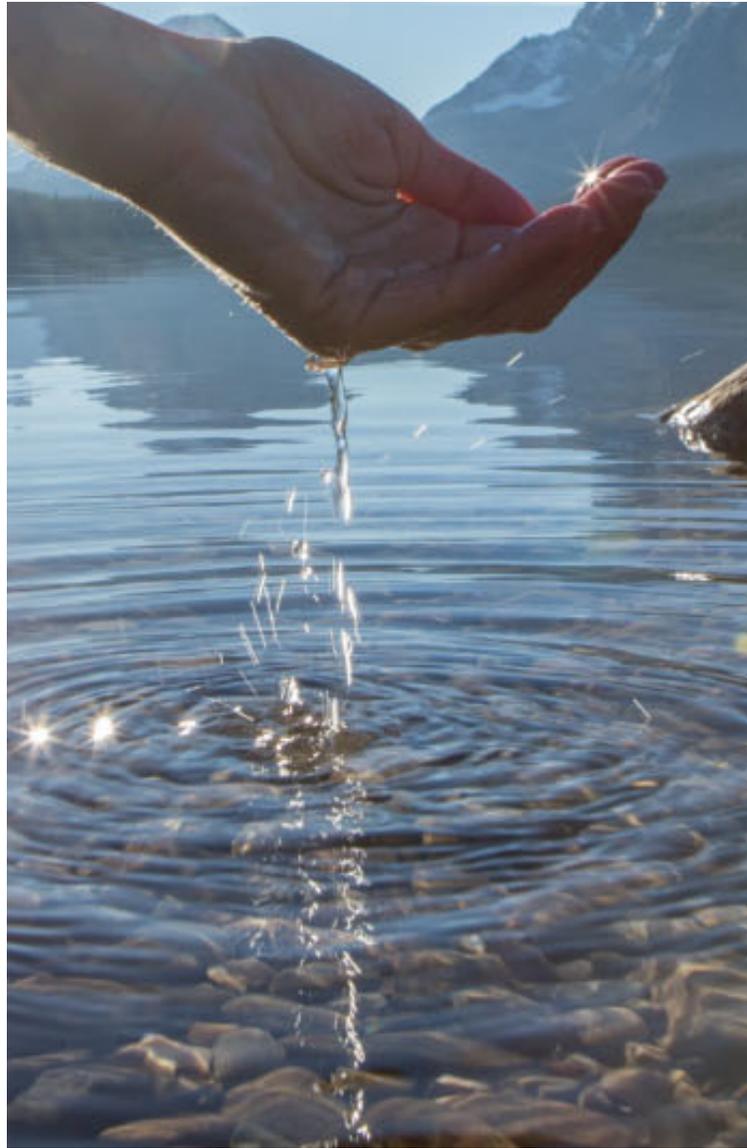
PROTECTING CANADA'S FRESH WATER: CREATING A CANADA WATER AGENCY

Assembly of First Nations Water Summit

November 24, 2020

Michael Goffin, ECCC





MANDATE COMMITMENT

With the support of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, create a new Canada Water Agency to work together with the provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and others to find the best ways to keep our water safe, clean and well-managed.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRESH WATER

- Canada has the 3rd largest renewable supply of fresh water in the world, about 7% of global fresh water.
 - A significant amount is not easily accessible as 60% is stored in ice, or flows north into the Arctic Ocean, away from the majority of the population.
- Access to clean fresh water is essential for human health and the environment, and supports diverse economic sectors.
- Fresh water is inherently linked to First Nations' rights, interests and knowledge systems and cultures.



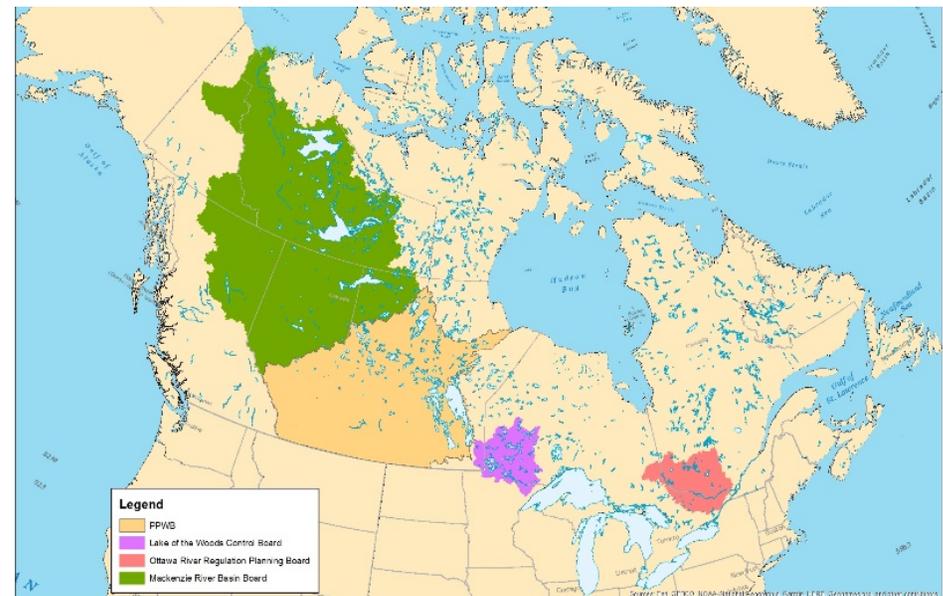
Credit: Chris Brackley/Canadian Geographic

STATE OF FRESH WATER IN CANADA

GOVERNANCE

- Freshwater management in Canada is a **shared responsibility** between federal, provincial, territorial, First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments
- More than **20 federal departments and agencies** share responsibility for fresh water
- Effective governance mechanisms exist in some drainage basins (e.g., Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg), but there are **limited mechanisms for coordination across jurisdictions and partners**
- **Indigenous peoples** are seeking **increased recognition of rights to water and greater roles in freshwater decision-making**
- There is a **large amount of freshwater data**, but insufficient integration and availability limits the ability to support decision making
- The International Joint Commission oversees the operation of more than a dozen watershed boards dealing with **Canada-U.S water quality and quantity issues**

GoC supports 4 domestic
inter-jurisdictional water boards
Covers one-third of Canada's land mass



STATE OF FRESH WATER IN CANADA

WATER QUALITY

- Significant **local and regional variability** in water quality in Canada
- Key stressors to water quality that require continued/enhanced attention, include **climate change, urban intensification and agricultural land use**
- **Climate change** has water quality impacts, including increased harmful algal blooms, wastewater system by-passes and changes to biodiversity
- Non-point runoff from agriculture and urban areas is **contributing to widespread excess algae problems**
- The Government of Canada is working in collaboration with First Nations to **end all long-term drinking water advisories** on public systems on reserves as a separate mandate commitment

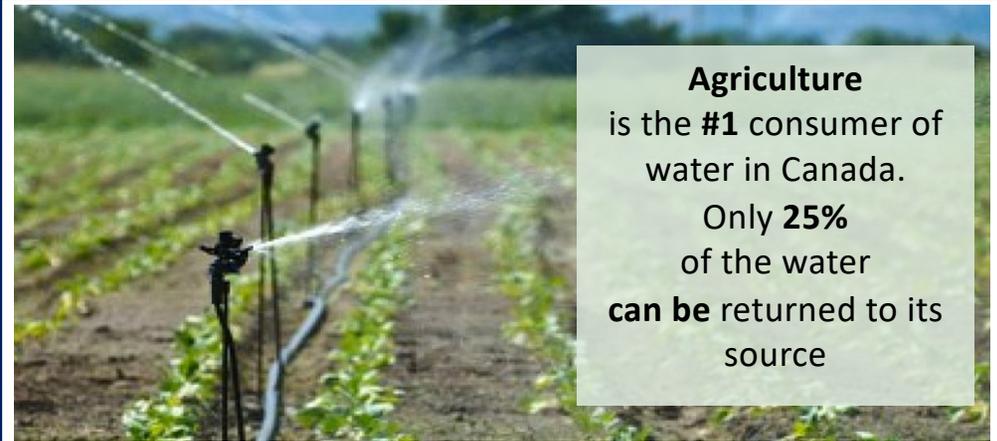
Over \$5.3 Billion in costs on the Canadian economy from harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie over the next 30 years without intervention.



STATE OF FRESH WATER IN CANADA

WATER QUANTITY

- **Federal-Provincial-Territorial Hydrometric agreements** are in place to address water quantity across Canada.
- **Floods and droughts** have significant impacts on communities, cultures, the economy, public safety and the environment.
 - First Nations are among the most severely impacted by flooding
 - The Federal Government has paid **out \$1B annually in disaster relief**, with 3/4 of this amount going towards flooding events
- **Development and climate change** have significant impacts on the traditional activities and uses of water bodies.
- Projections indicate **increases in drought and decreases in soil moisture** in the southern Prairies and the interior of B.C. as a result of climate change which threatens **food security and water dependent industries**
- Projections indicate **greater water level variation in the Great Lakes** with more extreme high and low water level conditions



Agriculture is the **#1** consumer of water in Canada. Only **25%** of the water **can be** returned to its source



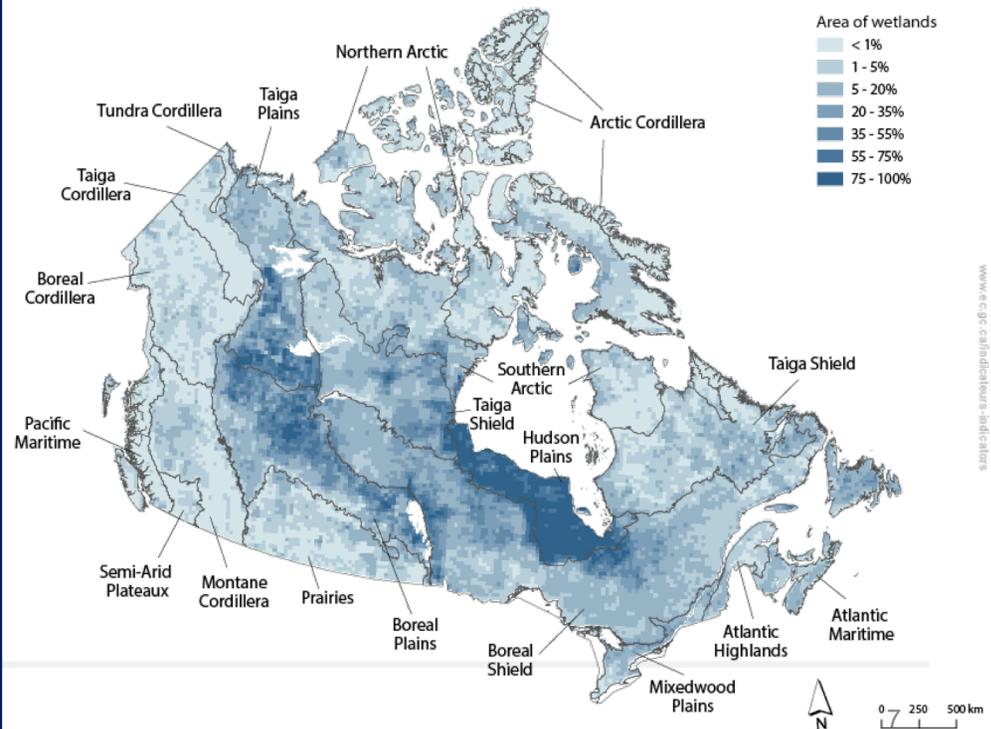
The 2013, **Alberta floods** were one of the **costliest** disasters in Canadian history, totaling more than **\$6B** in economic damage

STATE OF FRESH WATER IN CANADA

AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

- Canada is making progress to meet its water-related **2020 Biodiversity Targets** (under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity), although some (including Target 10 on reduction of excess nutrients) are moving more slowly than anticipated
- Key stressors affecting aquatic ecosystem health include **climate change, land-use changes, contaminant and nutrient pollution, and invasive species**
- There are significant threats to remaining wetlands especially in Canada's North, due to **declining ice thickness, permafrost thaw, and greater evaporation during warmer summers**

40-70% of wetlands loss in the Prairies since European settlement

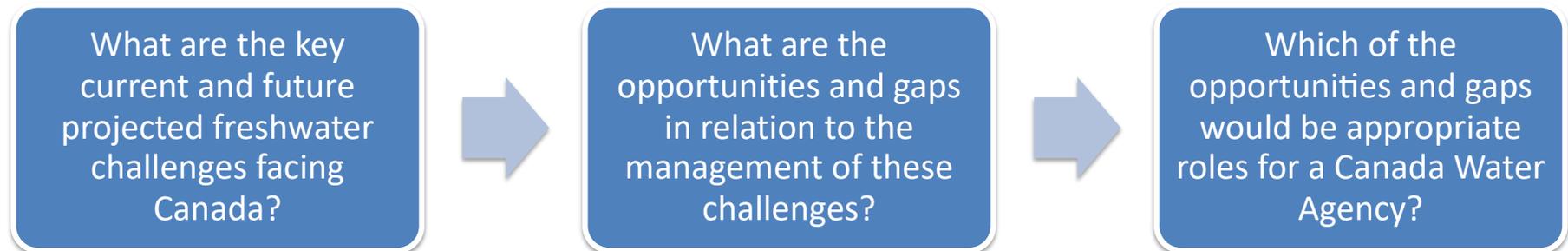


CREATING A NEW CANADA WATER AGENCY

Steps to date toward defining the scope and mandate of a new Canada Water Agency:

- Stocktaking of federal freshwater activities.
- Analysis of freshwater challenges and opportunities in Canada.
- Initial engagement to solicit early views on freshwater issues in Canada and potential roles for the Canada Water Agency.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH



FIRST NATION ENGAGEMENT AND INPUT

- ECCC is looking to engage with First Nations on freshwater priorities, challenges, opportunities and potential roles for the Canada Water Agency
- Engagement was delayed due to COVID
 - First contact with NIRs occurred in July 2020
 - More recently we have reached out directly to Modern Treaty Holders and Self Governing Nations
- Capacity funding to support engagement (to March 31 2021) was confirmed in September
 - Since that time we have received a significant number of proposals
 - We recognize however that not all communities are able to engage on fresh water at this time
 - We have also heard that some communities wish to begin with a broader discussion on fresh water
- ECCC views this as the start of an ongoing conversation on fresh water
 - To support this ongoing conversation we are working to secure multi-year funding support.

POTENTIAL TOPIC AREAS FOR DIALOGUE

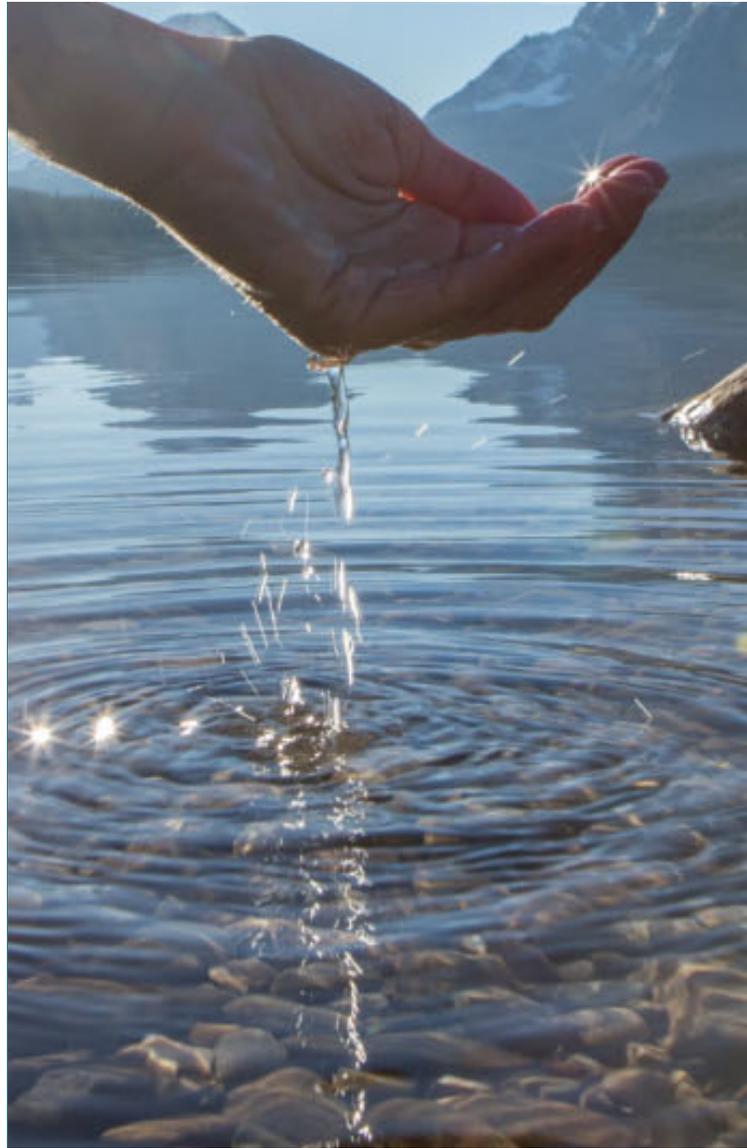
- The Government of Canada does not want to predetermine what First Nations will want to engage on in relation to the CWA.
- Potential topic areas for dialogue could include:
 - Collaborative Governance – Examine models of collaborative governance that successfully include Indigenous perspectives, which could inform or be applied to the CWA
 - Indigenous Knowledge – Examine ways Indigenous knowledge systems, values, responsibilities, and Indigenous data and information could be meaningfully included, protected and respected by the CWA
 - Other topics of interest to First Nations

SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT

- Mandate commitment does not include legislative or regulatory changes but recommendations will be accepted
 - The Canada Water Agency engagement is separate from, and does not replace:
 - negotiation or implementation of land claims, self government, treaties and other rights-based agreements.
 - engagement and consultation processes on specific freshwater-related policies, programs, legislation, or regulations (e.g., *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*).
 - engagement or consultation processes related to specific project approvals, for example those under the Impact Assessment process.
 - Distinct from engagement processes that may have freshwater connections, such as those focusing on climate change, nature, and Indigenous knowledge. Federal officials are working internally to coordinate on these topics.
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NEXT STEPS

- A discussion paper will be released for broad public consultation. We understand that engagement with Indigenous peoples requires separate processes and are open to co-developing documents to support those discussions.
- Some nations, governments and regions are ready to engage on the CWA commitment this fiscal year, some have advised they are not ready to engage at this time, and others have proposed an education and preparation period before engagement.
- We are prepared to support the approaches that work best for Indigenous peoples and are looking to confirm resources to support a longer term dialogue on fresh water. The intent is to have an ongoing conversation on fresh water and Indigenous involvement in a CWA, recognizing the mandate and activities of the CWA are likely to evolve over time.



Thank you