



Environment and  
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# PROTECTING CANADA'S FRESH WATER: CREATING A CANADA WATER AGENCY

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Canada 



## MANDATE COMMITMENT

With the support of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Special Representative for the Prairies, 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.
- Access to clean fresh water is essential for human health and the environment, and supports diverse economic sectors.
- Fresh water is inherently linked to Indigenous peoples' rights, interests, knowledge systems and cultures.



Credit: Chris Brackley/Canadian Geographic

# PRESSURES ON FRESH WATER

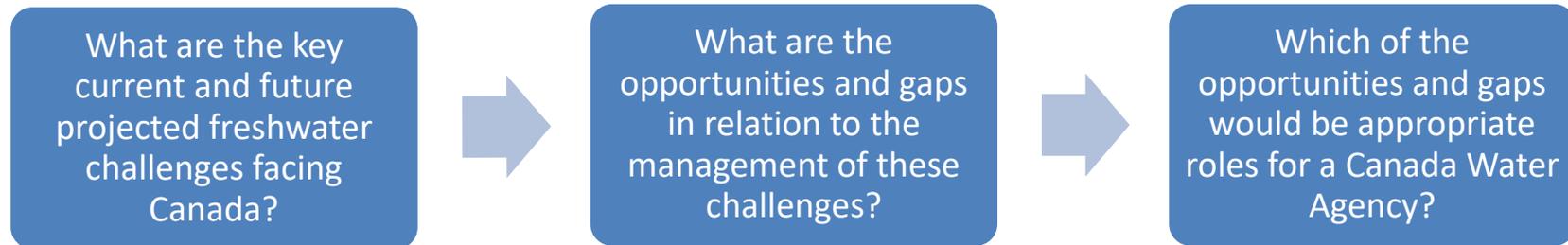
- Many pressures are currently impacting fresh water in Canada, such as resource development, hydrological dams, emerging pollutants of concern, inadequate infrastructure, and climate change.
- These pressures impact water quality, water quantity, and aquatic ecosystems health, as well as the communities that rely upon clean water.
- Freshwater management in Canada is a shared responsibility between federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments.



# CREATING A NEW CANADA WATER AGENCY

## Steps to date

- Stocktaking of federal freshwater-related activities.
- Analysis of freshwater challenges and opportunities in Canada.



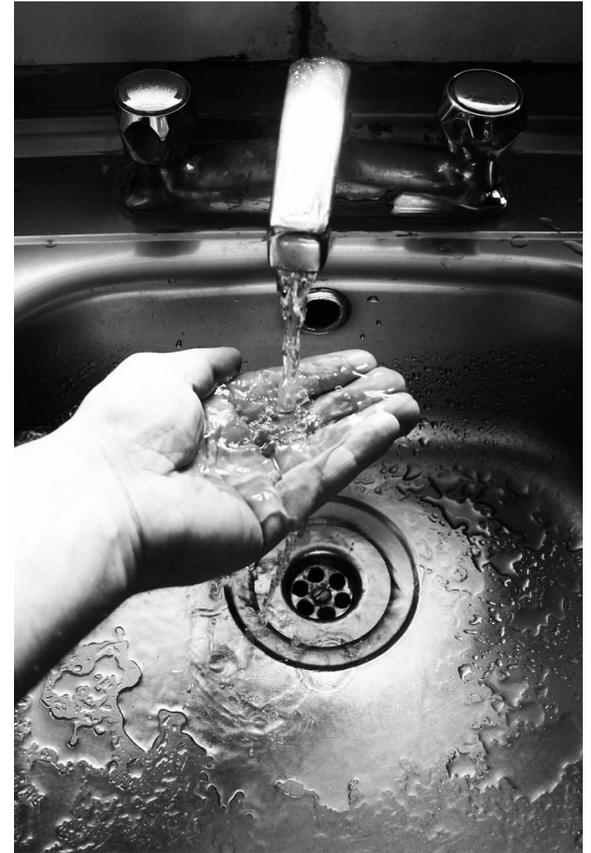
- Dedicated initial discussions, engagement, and relationship-building with First Nations, Inuit and Métis.
- Direct engagement with provinces and territories; public and stakeholder engagement via the online engagement platform PlaceSpeak.

## DISCUSSION PAPER

- Proposes objectives to enhance freshwater management and opportunities appropriate to the federal role in each area.
- Recognizes the important roles of provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples in the management of Canada's fresh water.
- States that the Government of Canada is not initiating legislative or regulatory changes at this time.
- Includes a section on Indigenous peoples and freshwater management, which is considered a starting point for discussions; we are open to co-developing other engagement materials.
- Engagement on the Discussion Paper ends March 1<sup>st</sup> for the general public and stakeholders; this timeline does not apply to Indigenous engagement, which will continue throughout 2021.

# SAFE DRINKING WATER

- The Discussion Paper acknowledges the important Government of Canada commitment to resolve drinking water problems on First Nation lands.
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is leading engagement with First Nations on safe drinking water legislation.
- Engagement on the Canada Water Agency will not duplicate engagement conducted by ISC, but any input received on this topic will be shared.



# INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

- The mandate and the activities of the Canada Water Agency has yet to be defined and will be informed by engagement activities with First Nations, Métis and Inuit.
  - Examples of potential areas of input and recommendations for a Canada Water Agency:
    - Collaborative governance – successful models that could be applied to the Canada Water Agency
    - Indigenous knowledge systems – examine ways to meaningfully include, protect, and respect Indigenous knowledge systems, data, and information
    - Providing feedback on the Discussion Paper opportunities and questions
    - Other topics of interest to First Nations
- Canada Water Agency engagement does not replace other engagement processes, for example on comprehensive land claims agreements, the Impact Assessment process or ISC drinking water engagement.
- Commitment to establish a Canada Water Agency does not include a mandate for legislative or regulatory changes but recommendations will be accepted.

# APPROACH TO INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

- Environment and Climate Change Canada would like to be as inclusive and comprehensive as possible in our engagement approach given our timelines and capacity, and is focussing on establishing respectful and meaningful relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit across Canada.
- Engagement is ongoing and continuing into next fiscal year (beginning April 2021)
  - Funding is available to support engagement
- Following an incremental engagement approach:
  - National Indigenous Representatives were contacted to advise on approaches to engaging Indigenous peoples across Canada
  - Reached out to Modern Treaty partners, self-governing Indigenous governments, and organizations that are not affiliated with a National Indigenous Representative.
  - More recently, ECCC started reaching out directly to provincial and territorial organizations to discuss engagement opportunities beginning April 1 2021

## PATH FORWARD

- Engagement with provinces and territories, stakeholders and the public (input on Discussion Paper by March 1, 2021).
- Ongoing engagement and collaboration with Indigenous peoples.
- Expert engagement on freshwater science and data.
- Development of options for the mandate of the Canada Water Agency.
- Agency creation (date has not yet been determined).



**Thank you**