

September 15, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: Showing leadership on water in the Speech from the Throne

Dear Prime Minister:

Canada is facing a water crisis that can only be addressed through strong federal leadership. We commend your government for recognizing this need by committing to establish a new Canada Water Agency. As representatives of a broad coalition of 38 leading water organizations from across the country, we are writing to you to ensure that this opportunity does not slip away. There is too much at stake. We are calling upon you to highlight the critical importance of water and promote the Canada Water Agency as a key priority of your environment and climate change platform in the upcoming Speech from the Throne and in your government's next economic update.

This is an important moment. As climate change intensifies, it threatens water supply and quality right across the country. This year alone we have witnessed floods in all western provinces and territories and droughts in parts of Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada. Over the past several decades the cost of water-related natural disasters has skyrocketed. Many of our major water bodies – Lake Winnipeg, Lake Erie, and others – are losing the fight against eutrophication. We need strong federal leadership to reverse these trends and build resilience to climate change, yet the federal toolbox is ill-equipped. The Canada Water Act, Canada's primary freshwater legislation, turns 50 this year. Water management responsibilities are scattered across over 20 federal departments. Indigenous Nations are largely excluded from decision-making over water flowing through their territories. Jurisdictional gaps and a lack of coordination between federal-provincial-territorial governments hinders effective solutions. The Canada Water Agency is our best chance to begin to address these challenges.

In your remarks on Earth Day earlier this year, you highlighted the importance of Canada's lakes, rivers, and streams. You also emphasized the long-term threat that climate change poses to our health and economy. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, you have shown great leadership by recognizing the importance of a green economic recovery rather than returning to business as usual. Water is a critical link between these interconnected priorities. Clean, accessible, and abundant water is the foundation of high-functioning, biodiverse ecosystems and resilient communities. It is the engine of key sectors of the Canadian economy, including agriculture, tourism, fishing, and natural resource development. As one of the most water rich countries in the world, Canada has a unique role to play, both at home and abroad, safeguarding water in a changing climate.

Prime Minister Trudeau, both science and public opinion are clear: water *must* be a priority as we plan for an uncertain future. The Canada Water Agency is the most visible and impactful way that your government can demonstrate your commitment to water. Public education and engagement events

organized over the summer and your government’s online public engagement platform demonstrate overwhelming support for a new Agency. We call on you to seize this opportunity by reaffirming your commitment to the Canada Water Agency and by highlighting the critical importance of water to the health of Canada’s communities, ecosystems, and economy in your government’s upcoming Speech from the Throne and next economic update.

We stand ready to assist your government with the creation of a new Canada Water Agency and in any other capacity that will help safeguard water security for future generations of Canadians.

Sincerely,
List of signatories below

- cc. The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Mona Fortier, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P.
- The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.
- Mr. Terry Duguid, M.P.

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