

MEDIA RELEASE
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Failures to implement a federal water strategy puts Canada's water at risk

The Federal government has made well over a dozen attempts to articulate a new water strategy over the past twenty years. It has failed every time. Recent public opinion surveys have found that Canadians consider water to be this country's most important natural resource. The continuing lack of national-level leadership on this critical issue is therefore deeply concerning.

A chronology of aborted efforts to implement a forward-thinking federal water strategy is featured in a new report released today, *FLOW Monitor: Canadian Water Policy Watch*. This report, compiled by an independent group of water experts from across Canada, reveals a troubling pattern of failure on the part of the federal government to protect Canada's most important resource. The most recent commitment was made in the Federal government's Speech from the Throne two years ago. Earlier this year, the Auditor-General's Office noted that negligible progress has been made on implementing this strategy.

"It is clear from the numerous attempts to develop a water strategy that the Federal government has acknowledged the importance of water but it is unclear why none of these efforts have ever been converted into an actual strategy," said Jim Bruce, co-chair of the Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW). "Perhaps it is lack of political will, or the difficulty of building consensus between federal departments, or the fear of stepping into provincial jurisdiction. Whatever the reason, it is clear that Canadians are unwilling to wait another 20 years for comprehensive action at the national level."

A recent Nanos-Policy Options public survey found that Canadians consider the adoption of a federal water strategy to be the top priority for addressing Canada's fresh water challenges.

"Canada is facing mounting challenges to the security of fresh water, including global warming, increasing water demands, worsening pollution of rivers and lakes, and an unacceptable number of communities that lack access to safe drinking water," says Ralph Pentland, primary author of the report and former director of Environment Canada's Water Planning and Management Branch. "A federal strategy would signal that governments consider water protection to be a national priority and would help ensure we have enough clean water to keep Canadians healthy, to grow food, to support economic prosperity and keep our rivers flowing."

FLOW urges the Federal government and all parliamentarians to work together to meet the commitment to develop a new national water strategy. Our nation's most important natural resource depends on it.

FLOW has released a comprehensive blueprint for federal action on water, called *Changing the Flow*. *Changing the Flow* sets out clear federal constitutional and legal responsibilities for water, 7 priority policy areas and 25 recommended actions to reignite the federal role in protecting fresh water. It is available at www.flowcanada.org.

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