



Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters

**BUILDING A WATER  
SECURE FUTURE**

*Platform 2021*





# Healthy Waters. Healthy Communities. Healthy Canada.

## Water health is community health.

Clean, healthy fresh water is the foundation of our prosperity and wellbeing. Healthy waters support our local economies, forests, fish and wildlife, food crops, quality of life, cultural memories, and survival itself.

## Water is central to Canadian identity.

Ours is a land of millions of lakes, rivers and streams and we connect with them. For years, Canadians have identified fresh water as the country's most important natural resource. Over the past year, our watersheds have been critical places of refuge and respite to help us through the stress of the pandemic.

## Water powers our economy.

Water is the backbone of Canada's major industries: energy and resource development, manufacturing, agriculture, fishing, and tourism all depend on abundant and healthy water supplies. Water insecurity fundamentally undermines our economic security.

## Water is central to reconciliation.

Water is sacred. Transforming how water is managed is an opportunity for the government to honour its commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Shared water governance can advance government-to-government, nation-to-nation relationships while addressing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

## But, our water is under threat.

The rivers, streams, lakes, aquifers, and wetlands in our communities are being degraded by pollution, overuse, and habitat loss. The ongoing climate crisis is exacerbating these impacts while creating new, complex challenges: water supply is increasingly erratic, water quality is compromised in many places, and the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events are putting more pressure on our waters.

## The status quo is not working.

The financial cost of extreme water-related events is skyrocketing, while the ecosystem services provided by aquatic ecosystems are deteriorating. These costs - to both humans and the natural world - threaten our long-term health, wellbeing, and prosperity. Global Water Futures estimates \$28B has already been spent responding to and repairing climate-related water disasters in Canada between 2000 and 2017.

## Investing in water will help build a brighter future.

We have a generational opportunity to rethink and rebuild old ways of doing things as we gradually emerge from the pandemic. Investing in water health will help us prepare for a climate-impacted future while creating good local jobs, advancing equitable outcomes, and contributing to the wellbeing of all Canadians.

# A 2021 Platform for Water Health

*As government, we will protect and restore healthy waters across the country to ensure that we are building a water secure, climate resilient Canada for future generations. Once elected, we will transform the way water is managed and guarantee the health of all waters in Canada by achieving the following:*

## 1. Build a Canada Water Agency

Establish a robust Canada Water Agency that leads collaborative efforts involving all levels of government, engages Canadians, and leverages Canada's wealth of knowledge in water science and technology. The new Canada Water Agency will (1) meaningfully advance the federal government's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, (2) create and mobilize the knowledge – both Western and Indigenous science and knowledge – needed to predict and respond to water problems and opportunities, (3) strengthen shared water decision-making and management, (4) emphasize the importance of watershed boundaries in all water decision-making, and (5) play a key role addressing outdated water laws and policies.

## 2. Renew the Canada Water Act

Lead a renewal of the Canada Water Act in collaboration with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments. The Canada Water Act is our primary federal freshwater legislation, yet it has not been meaningfully updated since it was passed in 1970. To ensure that the renewed Act is consent-based and rooted in nation-to-nation relationships, we will propose a co-drafting process with Indigenous Nations.

## 3. Introduce a Canada Water Fund

Create a Canada Water Fund to invest an additional \$225 million a year in the health of our waters. Across Canada, community organizations, Indigenous communities and local governments are ready to implement an abundance of freshwater projects that will create much-needed local jobs while strengthening our water security, climate resilience, and the overall quality of life for all people in Canada. The Canada Water Fund will provide the needed resources to ensure these essential projects are implemented in communities across the country.