

January 24th, 2022

Delivered via email

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: The Canada Water Agency in the 2022 Federal Budget

Dear Minister Guilbeault,

The members of the [Forum for Leadership on Water](#) commend you for the steps your government has taken to make freshwater sustainability a priority for all Canadians. We especially welcome the inclusion of a **\$1 Billion budget commitment to freshwater funding and an independent Canada Water Agency** in your platform document and mandate letters. We urge you to follow through on these commitments both in the upcoming 2022 budget and by establish a Canada Water Agency immediately.

We note that the **2021 budget allocated \$17.4 million towards the creation of the Canada Water Agency** and to get it started. Furthermore, your recent mandate letters reinforced the urgency of this timeline and underscored the federal leadership needed to protect Canadian water. Most important, these mandates recognize that the creation of an independent Agency is essential to federal leadership and successful freshwater management and the future sustainability of Canadian waters. Establishing an Agency within this critical timeline demonstrates your commitment to the protection of Canadian waters and security in an unprecedented time. This is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate leadership by this government delivering and strong support, with high expectations, exists from the water community across the nation.

The climate crisis is a water crisis. And as you are aware, climate disasters in 2021 led to the deadliest and most expensive summer on record for droughts, fires, and floods in Canada. These events have cost Canada over \$450 million alone incurred by the BC floods, the “most costly severe weather event in the province’s history” ([1](#)). In view of these disasters, it is clearer than ever that allocating funds towards water security and the Canada Water Agency is the best step forward to demonstrate your promise to keep Canadians secure and prosperous.

Canadians understand how important freshwater is to their health, prosperity, communities and livelihoods and it is well understood that federal leadership is essential to ensure success and resolve the fragmentation and piecemeal approach that has plagued Canadian water policy over the last twenty years. The promised \$1 Billion in freshwater funding is not only ‘historic’ as indicated in the 2021 platform ([2](#)), but also urgent. The \$1 billion funding could be used to address numerous basins, including the mentioned Great Lake-St Lawrence River systems, Mackenzie River Basin, Lake Winnipeg Basin and more. It also significantly provides tactical support for provincial initiatives to drive meaningful results.

Several provinces have committed to the security of Canadian freshwater, including for example British Columbia’s [Healthy Watersheds Initiative](#) and their provincial mandate to develop a watershed security fund and the joint federal-provincial blue-green infrastructure funding in Quebec ([3](#)). Such could provide useful leverage for federal efforts and offer powerful regional freshwater management examples to better support and amplify the federal actions of a Canada Water Agency and eventual federal fund.

2022 is potentially a critical year for many reasons, beyond the climate-water urgency it also marks the 50th anniversary for the [Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement](#) and the 25th anniversary of the [Mackenzie River Basin Master Agreement](#). These follow the 50th anniversary of the Canada Water Act in 2021 and all reinforce the need for updated federal leadership for water resources. The greater water community has eagerly anticipated such federal leadership for many years and now waits for and are strongly willing to support follow through on the efforts introduced in 2019 and are now being brought forward.

One clear priority is the establishment of the Canada Water Agency early in 2022 to ensure the mandate letter commitments are actualized, including:

1. A clearly defined timeline for the creation of an independent **Canada Water Agency** that intertwines the [Five Foundational Pillars](#) supported by over 50 Canadian water groups.
2. The creation of a **Canada Water Fund** to ensure and protect the health of Canadian waters.
3. The renewal of the **Canada Water Act** to “reflect Canada’s freshwater reality, including climate change and Indigenous rights” ([4](#))

Honourable Minister Guilbeault, both science and public opinion are clear: freshwater *must* be a priority as we plan for an uncertain future, and must be addressed with decisive action and concrete timelines. A significant linkage exists between water and climate and in fact success on climate will require a strong integration and action on water by the federal government. The Canada Water Agency is overwhelmingly supported by the public, scientists and policy experts, and is urgent and necessary (5). We call on you to act immediately by establishing the Canada Water Agency in 2022 and by demonstrating your commitment to water in the Federal Budget.

FLOW stands ready to support your ongoing leadership and efforts towards water.

Thank you – and on behalf of the entire FLOW members,

Oliver Brandes, FLOW Chair

Emily Hines, FLOW Coordinator



Please direct all communication to
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