



Critique

Public outcry for water quality control and against water sales to the US have been well documented by the Canadian media in the last decade. Current Federal water policy has been piecemeal and reactive to events and crises, showing little political will to deal with the “wicked problem” of integrated water management. The 2007 federal budget allocated a modest \$93 million over two years to improve targeted water clean-up projects, sewage infrastructure upgrades, develop private-public infrastructure partnerships, and fisheries research. Rick Findlay, director of Pollution Probe's water program calls the 2007 budget “the same old agenda, cleaning up the dirty spots and making sure the sewage treatment plants are flushing correctly.”

Summary of Significant Issues

Currently in Canada, there is no comprehensive national strategy to address water issues and coordinate water management across jurisdictions. Significant issues facing the management of Canada's water include:

Social Systems

- * no strong leadership to enforce existing legislation (Boyd, 2003)
- * election-centric timelines
- * “bewilderingly complex administrative” structures and fragmented jurisdiction (Brandes et al, 2005)
- * pressure to export water to the United States
- * water is undervalued
- * severe lack of federal funding
- * lack of national capacity to monitor, to administer, to enforce and to maintain Canada's water resources and infrastructure. (Gordon Group, 2007)

Bio-Physical & Ecological Systems

- * pollution affects water quality and ecosystem health
- * lack of water research
- * water supply shortages
- * Over consumption that can jeopardize instream flow needs

Built Systems

- * declining water infrastructure
- * no mandatory drinking water quality regulations
- * no implemented groundwater regulations

- ↑ no implemented groundwater regulations
- * water testing and treatment regulations vary greatly across the country

Ideas for Innovative Solutions

Politically, the strategy needs provinces to buy-in to the federal government playing a coordinating role on water initiatives. This will largely depend on the federal government providing sustainable funding and a legal commitment.



Socially, the strategy needs to debunk the myth of water abundance in Canada and promote awareness that Canada's water resources are unevenly distributed across the country, at risk from climate change, and require stewardship to ensure clean sustainable water for the future. Social marketing in addition to demand-side management are needed to make water an issue that receives political attention. Until the public is aware that we have both a problem and a great opportunity with water management in Canada little federal attention (or money) will be paid to building a sustainable water society.

