

July 23, 2020

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada
200 Sacré-Coeur Boulevard
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0H3
via email: ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca

cc. Parliamentary Secretary Terry Duguid,

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

We are writing as a coalition of Community Based Water Monitoring (CBWM) leaders from across the country. We are grateful that the Government of Canada has recognized healthy freshwater as a national priority and we are excited to partner with you to achieve this goal.

Our organizations demonstrate how CBWM efforts play an important role filling gaps in our national knowledge around water health. CBWM provides a vital service, advancing several of ECCC's core mandates as communicated in the mandate letter you received from the Prime Minister in December 2019. Specifically, Community Based Water Monitoring supports:

- Use of science, Indigenous knowledge and local perspectives to advance ECCC goals and targets;
- Better protection of people and the environment from toxins and other pollution;
- Creation of a new Canada Water Agency by working together with the provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and others to find the best ways to keep our water safe, clean and well-managed; and
- Development of further protections and actions to clean up the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Simcoe and other large lakes.

Currently, we do not have sufficient data to understand water health with basic indicators (WWF Watershed Reports, 2017). This results in inadequate information for evidence-based decision making. Recognizing and supporting CBWM as a legitimate data source will address this deficit to advance progress towards mandates. The long-term benefits of CBWM also abound, and include: CBWM networks are nimble, responsive and able to adapt quickly to the monitoring challenges climate change presents; CBWM data can be used alongside agency-collected data to address the key objectives of the new Canada Water Agency; and Indigenous CBWM programs can realize nation-to-nation water-quality commitments while improving understanding of water with vital knowledge from Indigenous communities.

At the 2018 National Roundtable, more than 50 CBWM leaders, Indigenous monitoring groups, water scientists and policy experts from ECCC and CIRNAC developed tangible recommendations for the federal government to support CBWM programs ([Elevating](#)

[Community-Based Water Monitoring in Canada Final Recommendations](#), 2019). In response to recent ECCC requests for further specificity, we have identified the following four priority actions:

1. **Strengthen and align CBWM efforts at the regional scale** by identifying regional leaders among existing CBWM groups that can scale proven programs, engage more partners and coordinate cohesive monitoring programs that address regional concerns (Recommendation 3.1c & b).
2. **Ensure that all federally collected and funded data is shared on existing open access platforms**, both governmental and non-governmental, that demonstrate robust data management practices. Platforms must enable merging of data from diverse sources, and be managed for long-term stability and public transparency (Recommendation 4.1a & b).
3. **Commit to using CBWM data in applicable regulatory, legislative, and policy processes.** As part of a broader review of the Canada Water Act, identify opportunities to integrate and apply CBWM data in federal water decisions (Recommendation 5.2a).
4. **Broaden and expand federal funding opportunities for CBWM activities**, including by adapting existing funding streams, such as the EcoAction Community Funding Program, to expressly include CBWM activities. Increase existing federal funding programs that support CBWM, such as the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program and the Great Lakes Protection Initiative (Recommendation 1.1).

Across Canada, freshwater concerns are regionally specific. A national response needs to recognize the regional nature of water challenges while engaging CBWM groups to be effective. Discussions around the establishment of a Canada Water Agency offer specific opportunities for the federal government to further its support for CBWM to close important data gaps. CBWM's role in the structure and operations of the new Agency must be clearly defined from its inception.

We would appreciate a formal response that identifies the tangible next steps your department will be taking to achieve our common goal of healthy freshwater across Canada.

Sincerely, the following members of the OLW Network:

(Response should be sent to Andrew Stegemann: andrew@ourlivingwaters.ca)



Roxanne MacKinnon,
Executive Director
ACAP Saint John Inc



Emma Wattie,
Director
Atlantic Water Network

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Wattie".



Lindsay Telfer,
National Director
Canadian Freshwater Alliance

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Richard Farthing-Nichol,
Coordinator
Forum for Leadership on Water

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Sherry Campbell,
President & CEO
Gordon Foundation

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Nathalie Piedboeuf,
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Alexis Kanu,
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Kat Hartwig,
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Living Lakes Canada

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Andrew Stegemann,
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Our Living Waters

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Stegemann".



Kelly Schnare,
Director
Reimagining Atlantic Harbours for 2050
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly B. Schnare".



Dwight Scott Wolfe,
Chief Operating Officer
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Kat Kavanagh,
Executive Director
Water Rangers

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Elizabeth Hendriks,
Vice-President, Freshwater
WWF Canada

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