

November 14, 2008

The Honourable Jim Prentice
Minister of the Environment
Government of Canada

Dear Minister:

Please accept our congratulations on your appointment to this portfolio, one which we consider vitally important.

The National Council of Women of Canada, which was established in 1893 and represents many thousands of Canadians from coast to coast, has very strong concerns for the environment, as evidenced by its work over many years. For example, as early as 1910, affiliated Local Councils of Women in Montreal and Toronto were responsible for their municipalities installing water filtration plants, and in the late 1970's NCWC was one of the first NGOs to raise acid rain as an important issue.

Our membership unanimously passed a motion at our 2007 Annual General Meeting in support of the development of a National Water Strategy. At the same time, we completed a cross-Canada public education program on water by presenting a six-person expert panel which clearly illuminated the many and varied threats to Canada's water. These well-respected experts dealt with such issues as drought, climate change and adaptability, urbanization, pollution, water diversions, industrial abuse of water in the west, water and the law, and the urgent need for a comprehensive National Water Strategy.

It is this latter issue which is of critical importance if Canada is to deal effectively with the crisis facing its water. NCWC is not alone in recognizing the magnitude of our water problems, which have been with us since well before the 1987 enactment of the Federal Water Policy, and which are exacerbated by population growth, industrial and urban development, and climate change, among other stresses.

Provinces and Territories, as well as many communities, are struggling to find solutions, and many respected groups and individuals such as the Gordon Water Group, the Canadian Water Network, the Canadian Water Issues Council, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, The Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Council of Canadian Academics, Dr. David Schindler, the Canadian Water Resources Association and Pollution Probe continue to speak out about the need for immediate action.

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Therefore, we strongly urge you to bring forth a bill to develop a National Water Strategy, working closely with Provincial, Territorial, First Nation, and municipal governments, water experts, and the Canadian public, to ensure that this vital resource - its quantity, quality, and sustainability - is protected for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Karen Dempsey
President

Text prepared with Gracia Janes, NCWC Vice President of Environment

cc: The Hon. Lisa Raitt, Minister of Natural Resources
The Hon. Jack Layton
The Hon. Stéphane Dion
Mr. Gilles Duceppe, Bloc Québécois

The National Council of Women of Canada is a federation comprised of Local Councils, Provincial Councils, and National Organizations. Founded in 1893, it was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1914 and has been designated by the Government of Canada as being of national historic significance for its role in Canadian women's history. For more information, consult our web site at www.ncwc.ca or contact our national office at #205, 251 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1X3.