



The Right Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., B.A., M.A.
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

July 11, 2011

Dear Mr. Harper,

On behalf of the National Council of Women of Canada may I respectfully draw your attention to the immediate and growing danger to Canada's fresh water - a vital resource for any country that hopes to protect the health, safety, environment and the economic and social capital of its population, today and in the future. That is, the recent severe Environment Canada staffing and programs cuts, which will exacerbate the cumulative impacts of cuts to water protection programs that have been made over very many years.

The earlier cuts were well documented in the Senate report of 2005 Water in the West: Under Pressure, which noted then that, there were cutbacks, for instance, to investments in "longitudinal water studies", the "National Water Research Institute", the "Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration" and the "mapping of aquifers".

For its part, the National Council of Women of Canada, representing over third of a million Canadians, has a long-standing interest, and policy, and has spoken to the Federal government many times regarding the need for protection of our national waters through strong Federal legislation, policies and programmes. These included such key water protection issues as, the need for : a shoreline management act, (1977) conservation of water resources (1980), safe drinking water (1985) , a national river basin management policy (1985), a halt to Environment Canada cutbacks (1987) groundwater protection (1989), continued protection and restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem (2004), federal retention of a strong regulatory role in the protection of the environment (2007), a halt to mining waste pollution (2008) protection of Canada's navigable waters (2009), and the need for, "*all projects within Provincial or Federal jurisdictions, having the potential to harm the environment, to be subject to an appropriate Federal or joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment that is transparent, ensures rigorous scientific input and scrutiny, allows meaningful access to the process and provides project scrutiny before proceeding to the regulatory stage.*"(2009).

Due to our very grave concerns regarding the earlier cuts to Environment Canada, and the potential for further harm to Canada's water, from 2005 to 2007, NCWC's affiliated group members conducted public education programs on the many threats to fresh water resources. From 2008 to 2011, funded by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, NCWC held programs on a

Water/Energy Connections theme. A key component of the program was a Canada-wide survey of the public's water and energy conservation practices and views, and of their opinion of government policies. In the context of escalating concerns regarding climate change and threats of water shortages and extreme weather and other natural events, water protection ranked highly for the public, with 80% supporting Federal legislation to keep water within its natural river basins, 77% supporting a National Water Policy, 76% a national public debate on energy use and the development of federal legislation and policies to ensure that large scale sources e.g. tar sands, mega-dams and nuclear power, do not negatively impact water resources.

Indeed, Canadians value their fresh water resources and strongly support government measures to protect them. The public counts on Environment Canada to carry its many vital tasks in this regard, and counts on the Canadian Government to fund its crucial work.

NCWC urges you, as Prime Minister of Canada, to commit to new and increased investments in fresh water protection endeavors of Environment Canada.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Mattok
President
National Council of Women of Canada

The National Council of Women of Canada is a federation composed of Local Councils, Provincial Councils, as well as National, Provincial and Local 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 #506, 251 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1X3.