



January 21, 2019

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](mailto:ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca)

Dear Minister Wilkinson:

Our Living Waters (OLW) commends the Government for making Canada's water health a priority by taking the initiative – as per the Mandate Letter issued to you by the Prime Minister – to “create a new Canada Water Agency to work 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” with the support of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

OLW is a Canada-wide network of over 90 members including non-governmental organizations, businesses, and Indigenous organizations collaborating to achieve the goal of *all Canada's waters in good health by 2030*. Our members range from local organizations, such as the Lake Winnipeg Foundation and ACAP Saint John to national groups, such as Swim Drink Fish Canada and WWF-Canada. A list of the OLW Network members can be found at the bottom of our [homepage](#). As an initiative that supports a national Network of freshwater experts, we look forward to working with you in the creation of the Canada Water Agency and supporting you to connect and consult with key stakeholders in the OLW Network.

The impacts of climate change are especially being experienced through water-related events, from the floods in central and Atlantic Canada to droughts in the prairies and western Canada that impact our communities, ecosystems and economy. It is therefore critical that the Canada Water Agency focus on the health of Canada's water across the country. The members of the OLW Network have collectively identified several [priority areas](#) to achieve healthy waters in Canada, priorities which we believe could be greatly advanced by a Canada Water Agency. They are as follows:

- **Priority: Indigenous Water Rights.** Government should engage with Indigenous leaders, communities and knowledge holders to determine how the mandate and work of the Canada Water Agency can best support Indigenous communities to implement their water rights, while also upholding both the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action.
- **Priority: Accessible Water Data.** There are large gaps in both water quality and quantity data across Canada. A Canada Water Agency should play a critical role to help fill these knowledge gaps while supporting efforts to make water data accessible for everyone, especially decision makers. This includes elevating the role and legitimacy of community-based water monitoring.
- **Priority: Water Policy.** A Canada Water Agency should support modernization of the federal water policy and the Canada Water Act, which have not been reviewed or modernized in over three decades.
- **Priority: Watershed Governance.** A Canada Water Agency should integrate and coordinate the many federal programs, departments and agencies that touch on water, providing a 'one-stop shop' that supports decision-making and watershed governance throughout the country. This includes

supporting the partnerships necessary to promote viable and effective watershed entities; partnerships that include Indigenous governments, provincial and territorial governments, local governments, civil society and others.

- **Priority: Green Infrastructure.** A Canada Water Agency should support reducing Canadian reliance on expensive 'grey infrastructure' - like pipes and treatment plants - to manage rainfall and invest in nature-based solutions - like wetlands, rain gardens, permeable surfaces - instead. This includes supporting solutions to eliminate sewage from entering our waterways, especially through combined sewer overflows.
- **Priority: Freshwater Awareness.** A Canada Water Agency should support increasing public awareness of freshwater health and threats across Canada to ensure that Canadians understand the important of freshwater health to our environment, economy and to mitigating the impacts of climate change.

There are many ways a Canada Water Agency can support keeping “our water safe, clean and well-managed”, and as these become clearer, we encourage the Canada Water Agency to focus its work on measurable outcomes. As an example, the OLV Network is driven by a comprehensive shared measurement system designed to support collaborative action on 24 specific impact measures that support freshwater health. An overview of our shared measurement system can be found [here](#), with the detailed measures [here](#).

While we appreciate that the details of the new Canada Water Agency are still being determined, we request a response to this letter to clarify the anticipated timelines and process for establishing the Canada Water Agency.

Our Living Waters is also ready to support the Government in any effort to consult with stakeholders in the creation of a new Canada Water Agency. We are well positioned to act as a conduit to our national Network of freshwater experts. Given the many calls for action over the past decade on federal water issues from both members of our Network, and beyond, we ask that Our Living Waters be invited to participate in the process of creating the new Canada Water Agency.

We are excited for the opportunities a new Canada Water Agency represent and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

The Our Living Waters Management Team

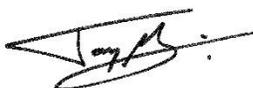
(Response should be sent to Andrew Stegemann: [andrew@ourlivingwaters.ca](mailto:andrew@ourlivingwaters.ca))



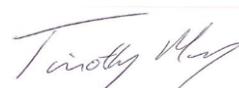
**Andrew Stegemann**  
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**Tony Maas**  
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**Tim Morris**  
*Funding Lead*



Cc. The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Cc. Mr. Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change