

Toward the Creation of a Canada Water Agency: Environment and Climate Change Canada Seeks Comments on Discussion Paper

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On December 17, 2020, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced the launch of public consultations to establish a new Canada Water Agency (“CWA”) and improve freshwater management across Canada.¹ As part of the launch, Environment and Climate Change Canada (“ECCC”) released a discussion paper: [Toward the Creation of a Canada Water Agency](#) (“Discussion Paper”).² The Discussion Paper proposes the development of the CWA and seeks Canadians’ input to identify freshwater priorities for the federal government.

The Government of Canada committed to establishing a CWA in 2019. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change’s mandate letter called on the Minister 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.”³

¹ Environment and Climate Change Canada, “Government of Canada launches consultations on new Canada Water Agency” (17 December 2020), online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2020/12/government-of-canada-launches-consultations-on-new-canada-water-agency.html> [“ECCC News Release”].

² Environment and Climate Change Canada, “Toward the Creation of a Canada Water Agency: Discussion Paper”, online: https://www.placespeak.com/uploads/6321/Canada_Water_Agency_Discussion_Paper.pdf [“Discussion Paper”].

³ Minister of Environment and Climate Change Mandate Letter (13 December 2019), online: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2019/12/13/minister-environment-and-climate-change-mandate-letter>.

The Discussion Paper sets out various objectives to enhance freshwater management in Canada. It also proposes opportunities to:

- 1 update, strengthen, and align various federal freshwater policies
- 2 update flood hazard maps and climate scenarios to inform climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction
- 3 engage Indigenous peoples in the development of the CWA
- 4 collaborate with the agriculture sector to advance freshwater management strategies
- 5 advance freshwater science and data collection, and
- 6 promote technology development in relation to priorities such as climate change adaptation, groundwater and surface water monitoring and prediction, rural and remote community water security, wastewater treatment, efficient freshwater use in various industries, and biodiversity and ecosystem protection.

The federal government seeks feedback on whether the objectives outlined in the Discussion Paper are the right objectives for the government to pursue and input on which objectives should be prioritized.⁴ Input is sought from provinces, territories, Indigenous peoples, local authorities, the private sector, non-government organizations, and the public.⁵ Feedback will inform the federal government's next steps in implementing the CWA.⁶

The deadline for providing feedback on the Discussion Paper is March 1, 2021.⁷ Information about where to send responses is provided in the Discussion Paper.⁸

In January 2021, the federal government will host a virtual national freshwater policy forum.⁹ A series of regional forums will be held in February 2021 to provide further opportunities for Canadians to participate in consultations on the Discussion Paper.¹⁰

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact one of the lawyers listed below.

⁴ Discussion Paper, *supra* note 2 at 12, 36.

⁵ *Ibid* at 4.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ *Ibid* at 39.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ ECCC News Release, *supra* note 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

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