

Canadian Water Resources Association's Annual General Meeting and Conference:

Sonya Meek, President of the Canadian Water Resources Association, today released to the CWRA membership a report *Toward a Canadian National Water Strategy//Vers une Stratégie nationale de l'eau au Canada*. The CWRA strongly supports a National Water Strategy as a key to effective management of Canada's water.

President Meek said, "The need for a coherent effective and efficient framework for management of water in Canada is now urgent. As is documented in the report significant threats to water exist throughout Canada, and in specific locations these have become acute problems of water scarcity and diminished quality. Both the longer-term threats and the immediate problems have serious implications for Canada's environment, economy and society."

"The choice facing Canada is clear. Establish an effective Canadian National Water Strategy (CNWS) now or wait until the existing serious water problems cropping up across Canada are sharpened to full crisis proportions by climate change, increasingly internal competition for water and pressure from water-starved regions outside Canada."

On Monday the CWRA National Board strongly endorsed the recommended collaborative approach for development of a CNWS set out in the report. The Board directed its working group on a CNWS to begin immediate exploratory discussion with possible partner groups to help to form a collaborative effort that can lead to a fully participatory consultative programme for creation and implementation of a CNWS.

The report, commissioned by the CWRA with funding from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, was authored by Professor Rob de Loë of the University of Guelph. It sets out the benefits for effective and efficient management of water that flow from a coherent, comprehensive, and facilitative national framework for water management. Countries that have implemented a national water strategy, such as the member states of the European Union, Brazil and Australia, have demonstrated greatly improved decision-making capability.

The report suggests that Canadians can, and should, develop a CNWS. It concludes that a collaborative effort by all sectors of Canadian society and all levels of government is required for the preparation of a National Water Strategy that will be widely supported and effective in implementation.

Sonya Meek notes that "This report on a Canadian National Water Strategy is the latest of a series of studies that CWRA has contributed to the discussion in Canada of the benefits of integrated water management. In recent years several groups from the Canadian NGO community, as well as private-sector business groups, have each issued calls for Canada to develop and implement a coherent and comprehensive framework for water policies. This report points out the pathway to that goal."

English and French language editions of the report will soon be available on the CWRA website. President Meek says "The CWRA urges its members, and any Canadian concerned about future policy directions for water in Canada, to obtain the report and study its recommendations. We are very hopeful that the direction for effective action set out in the report will be taken up in Canada in the next few months."

For more information contact Sonya Meek 416 661 6600 Ext 5253.

For more information on preparation of the report Prof. Rob deLoë 519 824 4120 53525 (until June 23).

- 30 -

Executive summary of report on page 2

Toward a Canadian National Water Strategy//Vers une Stratégie nationale de l'eau au Canada.

Executive Summary

Canada does not currently have an overarching national water strategy that facilitates more effective responses to current and emerging challenges and threats. The benefits of having such a strategy are numerous. Examples include the following:

- More consistent and effective responses to concerns with national dimensions, such as water exports and climate change
- Increased accountability due to broader stakeholder participation in governance
- Enhanced environmental protection and a stronger foundation for economic productivity
- Stronger national capacity to respond to threats and crises
- Better positioning to meeting growing international expectations and obligations
- Greater public acceptance and support for water management decisions

The Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) believes that a Canadian National Water Strategy (CNWS) is an effective way to address the water management challenges we face, and that such a strategy is within reach.

Two major reasons are offered in the report to support this viewpoint:

1. There is a long history in Canada of initiatives that aim to coordinate and integrate aspects of water management. These are found within the federal government, within each provincial/territorial government, and between governments at various levels. At the same time, a strong appetite currently exists in organizations outside of governments for national-level coordination and collaboration in water management.
2. Around the world, there are numerous examples of jurisdictions that have already developed, or are in the process of developing, overarching water policies, strategies or frameworks designed to address the kinds of challenges faced in Canada. This report examines the cases of New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil and the European Union.

Experiences in these jurisdictions provide examples, lessons and motivation for Canadians to develop a CNWS.

The CWRA commissioned this study to explore options and opportunities for developing and implementing a Canadian National Water Strategy. The report outlines CWRA's vision, and proposes an approach for developing such a strategy. The recommended approach is grounded in the assumption that broad participation from all stakeholders –inside and outside of governments – is required to develop and implement a meaningful CNWS. As a result, it is argued, the precise form and content of a CNWS cannot be specified in advance, but must be revealed as the process unfolds. The process outlined in this report begins with the formation of a leadership team, comprised of people who can speak to the needs, concerns and interests of the various stakeholder groups identified by or in the report. Active involvement by Indigenous participants at this early stage is critical. Similarly, active involvement by federal and provincial government officials (even in an unofficial capacity) is needed because of their constitutional responsibilities for water.

The remaining steps in the process are designed to build a broad base of support, clarify the objectives of a CNWS, and eventually create a solid foundation for governments (federal and provincial/territorial) to adopt and implement.