



# Protecting Canada's freshwater and securing our place as a global leader in freshwater research

Canada is home to one fifth of the world's surface freshwater, which sustains life and livelihoods from coast to coast to coast. While Canada's freshwater can seem abundant, it is a limited resource and is increasingly at risk from the dangers of climate change, pollution, habitat loss, and invasive species.

As Canadians, we have a responsibility to protect our freshwater and the health of their ecosystems. Over the past six years the Liberal government has taken on this responsibility and has acted accordingly. We have:

- Started the process of creating a new Canada Water Agency;
- Invested in a Freshwater Action Plan;
- Made the largest single investment in Canada's history to protect Canada's oceans and waterways with the Oceans Protections Plan; and
- Surpassed the previous marine conservation target by setting a new goal to conserve 25 percent of marine and coastal areas by 2025, and working to 30 per cent by 2030.

We recognize there is more work to do to restore and protect our freshwaters, as they face increasingly complex challenges. To address these challenges and protect our freshwaters for years to come a re-elected Liberal government will:

- Establish and fully fund a Canada Water Agency in 2022 to coordinate federal freshwater efforts;
- Modernize the 50-year-old Canada Water Act to better reflect today's freshwater realities to include Indigenous water rights and address climate change; and

- Introduce a strengthened Freshwater Action Plan, including a historic investment of \$1 billion over ten years to restore and protect large lakes and river systems.

We also understand the importance of science and research in the protection and restoration of our freshwater. For this reason, a re-elected Liberal government will take on global leadership by investing in freshwater science and research. We will:

- Invest \$37.5 million over six years to support freshwater research at the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA); and
- Support cooperation efforts with the African Great Lakes and other international water basins that could benefit from Canadian knowledge and experience.

## Canada Water Agency

We will build on our commitment in Budget 2021 to support the creation of a new Canada Water Agency, with its launch being set for 2022. In collaboration with Indigenous partners and communities, the Agency will consolidate and coordinate federal water efforts, and support provinces and territories, including in developing and updating river basin and large watershed agreements.

While past Conservative governments did not take this work seriously, as seen by Harper's shutdown of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, we are taking action to make up for these lost years of critical action to protect our freshwaters.

### **Canada Water Act**

We will modernize the Canada Water Act. This Act is Canada's primary federal freshwater legislation and provides a framework for collaboration among federal, provincial, and territorial governments in matters relating to water resources. However, the Act must be updated to reflect current, modern realities including climate change, and Indigenous water rights.

### **Freshwater Action Plan**

We will strengthen the Freshwater Action Plan with a historic investment of one billion dollars over ten years. This plan will provide essential funding to protect and restore large lakes and river systems, starting with the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River System, Lake Simcoe, the Lake Winnipeg Basin, the Fraser River Basin, and the Mackenzie River Basin. The Plan will also support our efforts in the Canada-US Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, a commitment between the US and Canada to restore and protect the Great Lakes. As we approach the agreement's 50th anniversary, this funding will set a new direction for bilateral collaboration regarding the Great Lakes' health and ecosystems.

### **Freshwater research**

We will invest \$37.5 million in the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)'s Experimental Lakes Area (ELA). Despite previous attempts by the Harper government to shut down the ELA, this new funding will ensure the ELA's vital work continues for years to come by supporting their research and by funding a Centre for Climate and Lake Learning.

The Experimental Lakes Area is a natural laboratory made up of 58 small lakes in northwestern Ontario and is the only place in the world where experiments on real lakes take place. The ELA has contributed ground-breaking research on freshwater science including an experiment that proved damage from acid rain to lakes could be reversed leading to global action on the issue. They are continuing to lead cutting edge research including conducting the world's only experiment on microplastics in a real lake.

This new funding will also support international freshwater science and research by encouraging international cooperation efforts, including that with the African Great Lakes. Understanding that climate change will only further exacerbate water scarcity and global conflict, this will be a major step for Canada to show international leadership.