



2010 VANCOUVER
WESTERN PREMIERS'
CONFERENCE

NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Western Premiers' Conference

WESTERN PREMIERS ACT ON WATER CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

VANCOUVER – Western Premiers are taking the first step to a new strategy to conserve and manage Canada’s valuable fresh water supplies.

“Decreasing glaciers and snowpack, flood threats, and manageable water supplies do not stop at provincial and territorial borders,” said British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell, chair of the 2010 Western Premiers’ Conference. “This work will help us make better decisions and develop comprehensive, long-term water management plans to secure our fresh water supply for future generations.”

Canada currently accounts for approximately seven to nine per cent of the world’s renewable fresh water supply. This supply faces increasing threat due to climate change and water consumption habits of industry, agriculture, citizens, and communities.

- Canada is ranked 29th out of 30 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries for per capita water consumption.
- Between 1985 and 2005, B.C. and Alberta glaciers show an 11.3 per cent decrease in area.

Western Premiers also agreed to promote action on water quality and water efficiency to lower water consumption. They supported establishing a national public-awareness campaign through product labelling that helps Canadians choose low-water-use appliances such as dishwashers and washing machines for use in their homes.

Premiers encouraged the federal government to conclude a memorandum of understanding with the United States to implement the WaterSense water-efficiency labelling program in Canada.

The Western Water Stewardship Council, created by Premiers in 2008, will be tasked with:

1. Identifying existing water and climate science and information activities, including how accessible this information is and how it can support decision making.
2. Identifying agencies and others currently engaged in these activities, and how their priorities can align with policy and decision making needs.
3. Establishing, as appropriate, improved mechanisms to better link these agencies and others, their activities and the policy and decision makers.

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The western jurisdictions will also work with the public and private sectors to make the next World Water Day, set for March 22, 2011, a national event to promote water conservation.

Premiers agreed to a Water Charter to underscore the need for immediate action on water priorities. Western Premiers will ask all provinces to join the charter at the upcoming Council of the Federation meeting.

“Water is essential to agriculture, forestry, industry, communities, recreation, health and ecosystems,” said Yukon Premier Dennis Fentie. “Impacts of climate change and our growing population mean that we need a different approach to the use of our water – at home and in our businesses and industries.”

Western Premiers also discussed how severe wet weather this spring has become a major concern for prairie farmers.

Flooding has prevented seeding and is expected to result in the largest abandoned acreage in Western Canada since the early 1970s. According to the Canadian Wheat Board, between 8.25 million and 12.5 million acres of Prairie farmland will go unseeded this year.

Western Premiers today called on federal and provincial agriculture ministers to immediately discuss supports for our hard-hit farming communities.

“Our farmers are once again facing a difficult situation,” said Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger. “Although we have programs in place, governments need to work together to make sure our farmers get the help they need under these challenging conditions.”

“At this time, 30 per cent of Saskatchewan cropland remains unseeded and a significant number of seeded areas have been flooded,” said Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall. “I toured just a small area of northeastern Saskatchewan yesterday and the damage is significant. Farm families are looking to their governments for support.”

“While flooding in Alberta is not as widespread, input costs and commodity prices are always a risk,” said Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach. “This year many of our farmers and rural communities face the additional challenge of getting a crop in.”

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BACKGROUND

WESTERN PREMIERS' CONFERENCE 2010: WATER CHARTER

Following is the text of the Western Premiers' Water Charter, agreed on June 15, 2010.

Whereas water is an essential component of all life on earth and there is no substitute for water, and

Whereas adequate clean water is critical to human health, sanitation and the liveability of cities, and

Whereas water in its natural state is critical for supporting ecosystem health, maintaining fisheries, providing recreation and attracting tourism, and

Whereas water is an essential input to agriculture and is necessary for industry and resource development, and

Whereas the changing climate is already affecting this vital resource, and

Whereas Canadians recognize our collective obligation to be responsible water stewards for North America and the world and the need to continue to improve our water conservation and quality efforts, and

Whereas Canadians have the potential to help address global water issues by developing and commercializing innovative new technologies and services and to be leaders in the development and sale of new technologies and services to improve water conservation and quality across the world, and

Whereas, provinces and territories recognize that watersheds do not follow provincial and territorial boundaries, and

Whereas provinces and territories recognize we can improve our efforts by working in partnership and leveraging the successes in management of water conservation and protecting water quality in our individual jurisdictions.

Therefore we agree to:

- Reinforce water conservation and protection as a key priority for citizens and their governments.
- Make water use more efficient, beginning by challenging every water use sector to prepare Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Plans.
- Increase our water monitoring effort and cooperate and share information on water conservation and water quality.
- Work with municipalities to ensure they have plans to deal with water-related emergencies and enhance best-practice sharing of planning tools among communities.

- Encourage Canadians and Canadian companies to be leaders in the development and sale of new technologies and services for water conservation and protection.
- Work with public and private sector groups to make a World Water Day – March 22, 2011 - a national event with a visible and co-ordinated focus on the above priorities.
- Collaborate with State governments on transboundary issues.

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