

Brief by the
Centre d'interprétation de l'eau
(C.I.EAU)

concerning the Canada Water Agency

Presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable
Development

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Questionnaire

This brief is presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, which is seeking briefs for its study on freshwater.

The mission of the Centre d'interprétation de l'eau (C.I.EAU) is to promote the protection and responsible use of water. It is the only museum fully dedicated to water in Canada. Recognized in 2018 as a finalist for the Cascade Awards by the Canadian Association of Science Centres for its permanent exhibit and its educational programming, the C.I.EAU welcomes thousands of visitors and school groups, who can learn about all aspects of water through our outstanding science activities.

1. Protecting and managing freshwater resources

Over the years, the C.I.EAU has become a leader in water-related public education. Its science activities, which often combine science and culture, are known throughout Quebec. Its play [Eldorad'eau](#) or the Quête de l'or bleu is currently a great success with primary and early secondary school students. C.I.EAU is changing the world one drop at a time, and its mission perfectly aligns with the objectives of the Canada Water Agency.

2. Partnering with federal departments and agencies

As an accredited science museum, C.I.EAU received a grant from Heritage Canada in 2021, which accounts for 10% of its annual budget. Through Artefacts Canada, C.I.EAU was also able to share information and artefacts in its collection on the industrial heritage of water treatment. C.I.EAU plans to approach Environment Canada in the near future about large-scale projects to raise awareness about water protection. In June, we will also be presenting a digital museums project to Digital Museums Canada.

3. Potential partners

Several departments are involved in water issues: Environment, Agriculture, Fisheries and Oceans, Heritage, Transport Canada, and more. All could potentially contribute to the museum's development. C.I.EAU has benefited from Eco Canada wage subsidies for four youth project managers and facilitators. These young people are still employed by C.I.EAU, which benefits from their environmental expertise. C.I.EAU has also received funding through the Department of Heritage's COVID-19 support measures.

4. Success stories

C.I.EAU is a partner with the Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation, which approached Environment Canada to help protect water bodies from increasingly powerful boats that stir up sediment and accelerate eutrophication. C.I.EAU has already hosted a [conference](#) on this topic. Environment Canada's response referred us to Transport Canada and the Canada Shipping Act, which does not prohibit this activity. With increasingly powerful boats on our lakes and water bodies, they have difficulty surviving. Moreover, their entire ecosystem is disturbed.

It is critical that these two departments coordinate their efforts, perhaps along with their allies at Fisheries and Oceans and Agriculture Canada. The new Canada Water Agency will provide a forum for all these departments to come together, eliminating the silo effect, and make setting priorities easier.

5. **Relationship with the new Canada Water Agency**

A consensus emerged during a webinar for Quebec water stakeholders on October 8, 2020, that the Canada Water Agency will play a key role in raising public awareness about water issues. We have been doing just this for years, sharing our expertise through our [science activities](#). C.I.EAU wants to **be a privileged partner of the Canada Water Agency by becoming a National Water Museum**. The attached presentation explains how this could happen.

The National Water Museum will be a hub for raising public awareness about water issues. Canada has one of the largest supplies of freshwater in the world. It needs strong outreach to educate people about watershed protection.

6. **Federal legislation, policies and regulations**

Along with the Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation, C.I.EAU would like regulations related to navigation to be better adapted to lake depth and respect lake biodiversity. The Canada Shipping Act is poorly suited to lakes, which cannot accommodate powerful motorboats.

7. **A more effective role in watershed protection**

C.I.EAU participated in the Collaboratif Grands Lacs-Saint-Laurent and supports all of the recommendations that were made during this important consultation on the immense Great Lakes – St. Lawrence watershed.

In addition, the largest tributary of the St. Lawrence River, the Ottawa River, which separates Quebec and Ontario, should be the focus of federally funded and encouraged interprovincial collaboration to protect the health of this key river, which provides drinking water to millions of Canadians.

8. **Federal action on freshwater**

While respecting provincial jurisdiction, the federal government should facilitate provincial initiatives to harmonize practices across Canada, particularly with respect to watershed management. Integrated watershed management is recognized worldwide as a best management practice.

Farming, along with municipal discharge, is the major cause of freshwater eutrophication in Canada. Funding is needed to encourage sustainable agricultural practices and water system and infrastructure upgrades and to regulate practices, if necessary. The survival of our waterways is at stake. Farming and discharge are critical issues that need addressing.

9. **Federal withdrawal from laws and regulations**

Recreational boating should be a shared federal/provincial responsibility as it affects water quality, which is a provincial responsibility. Immediate priority must be given to reviewing and aligning laws and regulations to protect the heritage of Canada's lakes.

10. Information and data collection

The same standards and protocols for collecting water quality data must be used across Canada so that the data can be compared across the provinces, with a view to having the Canada Water Agency create a strategic plan that can be rolled out across the country. This data should be shared with the public and explained, ideally in real time. Many Canadians swim in waterways without knowing if the fecal coliform level is high or not. Public health is at risk. Who is responsible for telling Canadians it's not safe to swim?

Furthermore, pesticide testing is extremely expensive and should be federally funded.

International and trade issues

Having the world's largest freshwater heritage, Canada should play a greater international role. A National Water Museum would enhance Canada's international reputation. This science museum would provide continuing education and be a showcase for Canadian freshwater innovation. C.I.EAU wishes to become a National Water Museum and supports these objectives. It has the educational and scientific expertise that is needed. The Global Network of Water Museums would heartily welcome this museum.

Moreover, academic research in the field of water suffers from a lack of visibility. Science museums complement research by making it available and accessible to the wider public. This would boost Canadians' pride in Canadian discoveries about water and give Canadians the opportunity to visit this globally recognized great museum.

Please take note of the attached document concerning a National Water Museum, championed by C.I.EAU.