

Webinar on the creation of a

# CANADA WATER AGENCY

October 2020

Event organised by



Fondation  
de Gaspé Beaubier

and

**AQUA FORUM**

Summary Report Produced by



**ÉCOGESTION**  
SOLUTIONS

To ensure that the webinar runs smoothly and meets the stated objectives, the de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation and Aqua Forum have joined forces with a variety of partners to form a committee dubbed “the work group.”

The work group for the webinar on the creation of a Canada Water Agency is comprised of:

- Mr Jean-Éric Turcotte of Stratégie St-Laurent;
- Mr Jean Cinq-Mars, Co-Chair of the Great Lakes-St Lawrence Collaborative;
- Mrs Christiane Pelchat, Chief Executive Officer of Réseau Environnement.
- Mrs Denise Cloutier of the Centre d'interprétation de l'eau;
- Mr Antoine Verville, Executive Director of ROVBQ;
- Mr Jean Paquin, VP Technology at Sanexen;
- Mrs Stéphanie Allard, urban planner and associate biologist at ÉCOgestion-solutions;
- Mrs Dominique Monchamp of the de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation and Aqua Forum.

We would like to thank the aforementioned for their commitment and collaboration. We would also like to thank the interpreters, Mrs Lauren Michaels and Mrs Deborah Stupples, who helped build the bridge between Francophones and Anglophones.

## Preamble

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In an effort to reflect on the creation of a Canada Water Agency, various stakeholders in Quebec organised a webinar, on October 13, 2020, on the future Canada Water Agency. The objective of the webinar, held in two parts, was to inform and consult Quebecers and Canadians on establishing a Canada Water Agency, and on the importance of raising awareness among Canadians on challenges related to water.

This report presents the highlights of the webinar conferences as well as the recommendations made by the panelists. The opinions and recommendations expressed in this document are those of the panelists and designated organisations, and do not necessarily reflect those of the work group.

As a follow-up to the webinar, the work group will continue to meet to determine the recommendations that will be submitted to the appropriate Ministers.

**\* To facilitate a quick reading, the recommendations are highlighted in bold.**

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## Webinar #1: The Canada Water Agency and the Province of Quebec

The aim of this webinar was to assess the outlook and progress made to date on the creation of the Canada Water Agency, and to acknowledge the recommendations put forth by various Quebec and international organisations on the subject of water governance.

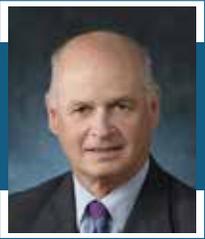


### Government Commitment to the Creation of the Canada Water Agency by Francis Scarpaleggia, Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Louis.

In his presentation, Mr Francis Scarpaleggia outlined the political and governance context around the issue of water. According to him, the water community is small while the stakes are enormous, going far beyond the scientific priorities of conservation and recycling. In addition, they are difficult to communicate in simple and comprehensible political language in terms of electoral objectives. Added to this is the complexity of intersecting jurisdictions. There are 20 federal departments with responsibilities that affect water in one way or another, in addition to many other levels of government and agencies.

The speaker said that no single government can ensure water protection since the issue is too broad and requires the involvement of too many stakeholders. Governments need to oversee efforts, but it is a complex task requiring the collaboration and knowledge sharing of all stakeholders.

To this end, Mr Scarpaleggia suggested that the Canada Water Agency would encourage greater collaboration within the federal government. The Agency would not be built all at once; it would take shape gradually and serve as a tool for much needed democratic reform to address the impacts of climate change on water resources.



**The Importance of Innovative Water Governance in 2020** by Jean Cinq-Mars, Co-Chair of the Great Lakes-St Lawrence Collaborative and Quebec's Commissioner for Sustainable Development (2009-2016)

The goal of the Great Lakes and St Lawrence Collaborative initiative was to develop a common vision and an action plan to intensify and accelerate collective action and investments to protect and restore the Great Lakes and St Lawrence ecosystem. As Co-Chair of the Collaborative, Mr Cinq-Mars emphasized the importance of identifying measures and proposals for modern water governance for Quebec and Ontario, Canada's two most populous provinces. Without proper governance, efforts will wane and investments will not pay off.

**Recommandations**

**Reframe governance to make it more effective by providing access to a broad range of expertise and allocating the necessary budgets to implement solutions. For integrated water management, the Agency could prove to be an asset for the implementation of solutions in the face of major challenges.**



**The Recommendations of the International Joint Commission** by Pierre-Yves Caux, Director of Science and Engineering for the Canadian Section of the International Joint Commission (IJC)

As the International Joint Commission works to find common interests in resolving disagreements between the United States and Canada, Mr Pierre-Yves Caux's role is to maintain scientific credibility and institutional excellence. The challenge remains to find common solutions for the transboundary basins even though the contexts in which the issues emerge may vary. As a result, it is necessary to amplify the issues related to climate change.

**IJC Recommendations**

**The Agency should support the concept of adaptive management and promote the sharing of climate and flood-related information; information sharing is essential for data consistency and decision-making. The Agency could ensure reliable partnerships with First Nations and the integration of their knowledge. The Agency should act as a catalyst and coordinator in solving problems, by adopting an innovative approach.**



**The Importance of Talking About Water** by Christiane Pelchat, Chief Executive Officer of Réseau Environnement

Christiane Pelchat maintains that water has no borders and that discussions cannot be limited to just one place. Recently, a strategy was adopted in Québec for better water management. Internationally, water scarcity in some countries and poor management of drinking water and freshwater are issues that must be addressed. Réseau Environnement can be an eager partner in this initiative that goes beyond borders.

### Recommandations

**Focus on collaborative federalism, without political partisanship. The goal of the Canada Water Agency should be to ensure water security, protection and good management, in addition to strengthening resilience to climate change. Investments in water will be necessary and will be as beneficial as investments in road infrastructure, for example.**

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## Webinar Question Period 1

A number of speakers were asked to comment on certain major topics.

- **The role of the provinces with respect to the Canada Water Agency: intentions regarding the dialogue between Canada and the provinces.**

Mr Francis Scarpaleggia mentioned that the federal government will need to consult with the provinces to obtain their views. The agency will have to create its own priorities, understand the respective position of the other stakeholders, then act to consolidate matters.

Mr Jean Cinq-Mars argued that Canadians urgently need practical solutions to real-world climate change problems. It would be wise to look at examples of programs that have funded successful initiatives (i.e., the St. Lawrence Action Plan, clean water program, etc.).

- **Inclusion of First Nations Communities**

Mr Francis Scarpaleggia argued that the Agency would have the expertise to advise on the investments needed, but would also have to focus on including the views of all stakeholders. Knowledge sharing and exchange should be encouraged.

Mr Jean Cinq-Mars stated that the consultations carried out through the Great Lakes Collaborative have always taken communities into account. First Nations communities have a cultural attachment and an undeniable knowledge that must be taken into account for any issue related to water.

Mr Pierre-Yves Caux stated that it is imperative to promote the participation of First Nations representatives on the work groups so as to continually have their input on projects that concern them.

### ● Funding Increase for Water-Related Non-Profits and Funding for End-of-Life Infrastructures

Mr Francis Scarpaleggia believes that the Agency would not be a government department and would not be responsible for funding. It would be limited to making recommendations.

Mr Jean Cinq-Mars stated that an action plan is needed to effectively address pressing water issues. The Canada Water Agency would have the task of identifying priorities, guiding funding towards solutions, and determining the role of stakeholders and the technologies needed for implementation.

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## Webinar #2: The Role of the Canada Water Agency in Raising Canadians' Awareness of Water Issues

The aim of this webinar was to bring to light water awareness campaigns conducted by various organisations in Quebec, while presenting the key elements of a successful awareness campaign from the perspective of a marketing expert.



**The Greatest Water Problems Unknown to Canadians** by Sonja Behmel, CEO and Co-founder of WaterShed Monitoring; President and Co-founder of WaterShed Monitoring Europe; Science Coordinator at Agiro, Associate Professor at Laval University

Mrs Sonja Behmel argued that the most important issues relating to water are unknown to Canadians. Yet, without sufficient water quality and quantity, there would be no economic growth, no development, no health and safety. Thus, water is no longer just a matter of the environment, but rather of the survival of civilization, as history has shown. It is necessary to include all the participants and the government departments to protect this resource. Moreover, putting a price on water makes it possible to protect it, and provide access to sufficient knowledge and financial resources for all participants to take part in its protection.

Water is a local, regional and international strategic challenge that can be broken down into five topics: lack of wastewater treatment, over-consumption of drinking water, human infrastructure and politics, increase in the use of road salts, and climate change.

### Recommandations

**The Agency should draw inspiration from the European Water Framework Directive, where notably each country is required to produce the same knowledge on its water resources. Therefore, joint action is needed, coupled with commensurate financial means.**

**A so-called framework directive would allow for sound management that respects jurisdictions, the actors already involved, climate zones, political organisations, stakes, types of soils, and types of bodies of water.**



**Défi Saint-Laurent** by Jean-Éric Turcotte, Executive Director at Stratégies Saint-Laurent and Executive Director of the St. Lawrence Action Fund

The Défi Saint-Laurent is a program that aims to minimize the impact of plastics and microplastics in the St. Lawrence River through awareness and mobilization. The success of the approach is due to the fact that it is built on the entire St. Lawrence, as well as being adapted to and structured within each community along the St. Lawrence by front-line partners. The current trend in programs is to work from coast to coast to coast, even though the realities are different.

### Recommandation

**The Agency must set up new programs rather than replace organisations currently active in and familiar with the territory.**



**The Water Interpretation Centre** by Denise Cloutier, Executive Director

The aim of the Water Interpretation Centre is to promote the protection and responsible use of water. Young people are the next generation in training, and it is important to create greater awareness of consumption. An awareness campaign was launched by the Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation of which C.I.Eau is a member. Its success was due to the fact that people could identify with it, but above all because of the Internet campaign associated with it.

### Recommandation

**The Agency would benefit from investing first in raising awareness among young people, since they are the vectors of change. The effectiveness of building awareness can be amplified by using Internet campaigns, which are also inexpensive.**



**Saving Drinking Water** by Mathieu Laneuville, Deputy Director General, in charge of the technical sector of Réseau Environnement

Mr Laneuville maintained that the majority of Quebecers feel a sense of urgency in taking action for the environment, but few of them take concrete steps to help attenuate the problem.

#### Recommandation

**The Canada Water Agency could provide access to communication tools that would redirect citizens to appropriate resources for responsible drinking water consumption.**



**J'adopte un cours d'eau** by Nathalie Piedboeuf, Executive Director, Groupe d'éducation et d'écosurveillance de l'eau (Water Education and Eco-monitoring Group)

"I Adopt a Waterway" is a citizen science (or participatory science) educational program that enables young people to study rivers and assess their overall health. Fieldwork helps the development of a sense of ownership of waterways and thus a greater awareness of them.

#### Recommandation

**There is a need to harmonise education efforts at the regional level and to give educational programs as much recognition as other water initiative programs. Several years are needed to bring about change.**



**Think Blue** by Céline Schaldembrand, Communications Coordinator at the Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec (ROBVQ)

"Think Blue" is a campaign to raise awareness and adopt good daily practices regarding water. The initiative, deployed on several platforms (TV, Internet, etc.) and through different strategies (influencers, co-viewing, etc.), relies on simple and humorous messages, proposing 4 quizzes. The initiative is aimed at French speakers aged 11 to 77, i.e. 4 generations.

#### Recommandations

**The Agency must intertwine provincial approaches such as "Think Blue" and local initiatives, (i.e., Quebec's OBV [watershed organisations] as part of Water Month). Linking macro and micro approaches shines a brighter light on the issues being raised and fosters a greater affinity between individuals and the resources in their living space.**



**My River and Me** by Benoit Mercille, Executive Director of the Monique-Fitz-Back Foundation

"My River and Me" is a drawing competition, accompanied by educational tools, which aims to make people aware of the richness of the St Lawrence River, to help develop pride and allow young people to express themselves. This contest fosters a greater sense of ownership of the issues and thus, in the long run, a greater defence of the St Lawrence.

**Recommandation**

**The Agency should concern itself with raising awareness among young people in the water environment and rely on the presence of organisations that are already active and recognized in school settings.**



**"Les Blancs-becs débarquent"** initiative of Frédéric Poitras, committed citizen

The initiative began with a view to raising awareness on the presence of our First Nations neighbours. Often, the greatest obstacles to approaching First Nations people are ignorance, prejudice and fear of not doing things in the right way. By going beyond his fears, Mr Frédéric Poitras was able to benefit from the transfer of knowledge. To be successful with such an approach, it is essential to take the required time, to respect what the community can teach us, but above all how it wants to teach us.

**Recommandation**

**The greatest scientists to deal with climate change issues are the elders; it is necessary to listen to them and not just invite them.**



**The Commitment of the Saukiing Anishinaabekiing Water Reality Ambassadors** by André-Yanne, Executive Director of the Climate Reality Project Canada

The Climate Reality Project Canada is an organisation dedicated to finding ways to raise awareness about the climate emergency, among all levels of society. It is also dedicated to expanding initiatives that contribute to the fight against climate change in Canada by employing climate ambassadors. Mrs Parent's speech raised awareness and emphasized the importance of recognizing and understanding the changes taking place on the resource in order to use it more responsibly.

### Recommandation

**The Canada Water Agency should honour the expertise and perspectives and, above all, the voices of the various nations of Turtle Island, to go beyond a user relationship with water and understand our lineage with it and our responsibility towards future generations.**

## Interview with Mr François de Gaspé Beaubien and question period for Webinar #2



### Keys to Success of a Good Awareness Campaign, from a Marketing Point of View by François de Gaspé Beaubien, CEO of Zoom Media

Interview conducted by Mrs Dominique Monchamp, Senior Advisor of the de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation. Mr. François de Gaspé Beaubien was asked to speak about the creation of a Canada Water Agency, given his expertise in marketing.

- **How to trigger change and get citizens involved?**

Mr de Gaspé Beaubien said that it is essential to focus on a strong image and a simple message. By relying on a simplified message, one is more likely to generate interest; then go into greater detail, provide more information and achieve greater impact.

- **How do you explain that so much effort has garnered so little success? What advice can you offer that could allow for a better outcome?**

The media does not give enough space to initiatives such as the ones presented in this webinar because they are unaware of the issues at stake. Mr de Gaspé Beaubien maintained that every individual has a significant amount of knowledge, but a critical mass of Canadians is not being reached. The actions are good, but the resources are not sufficient. It is therefore necessary to focus on a simpler message to reach a critical mass, and then allow them to go out and get more information.

The speaker presented the issue of water as a product that we must introduce to citizens. It is imperative to present an image that communicates the benefits of the product, while at the same time showing that there are challenges as well as opportunities.

- **How can we simplify the message while taking into account the complexity of the issue?**

Mr. de Gaspé Beaubien stated that it is necessary to get attention, then communicate the initiatives. Captivate an audience and create a system that builds on itself and goes viral, starting with a simple message. An effective website, for example, would captivate this audience and then direct them to other more scientific websites.

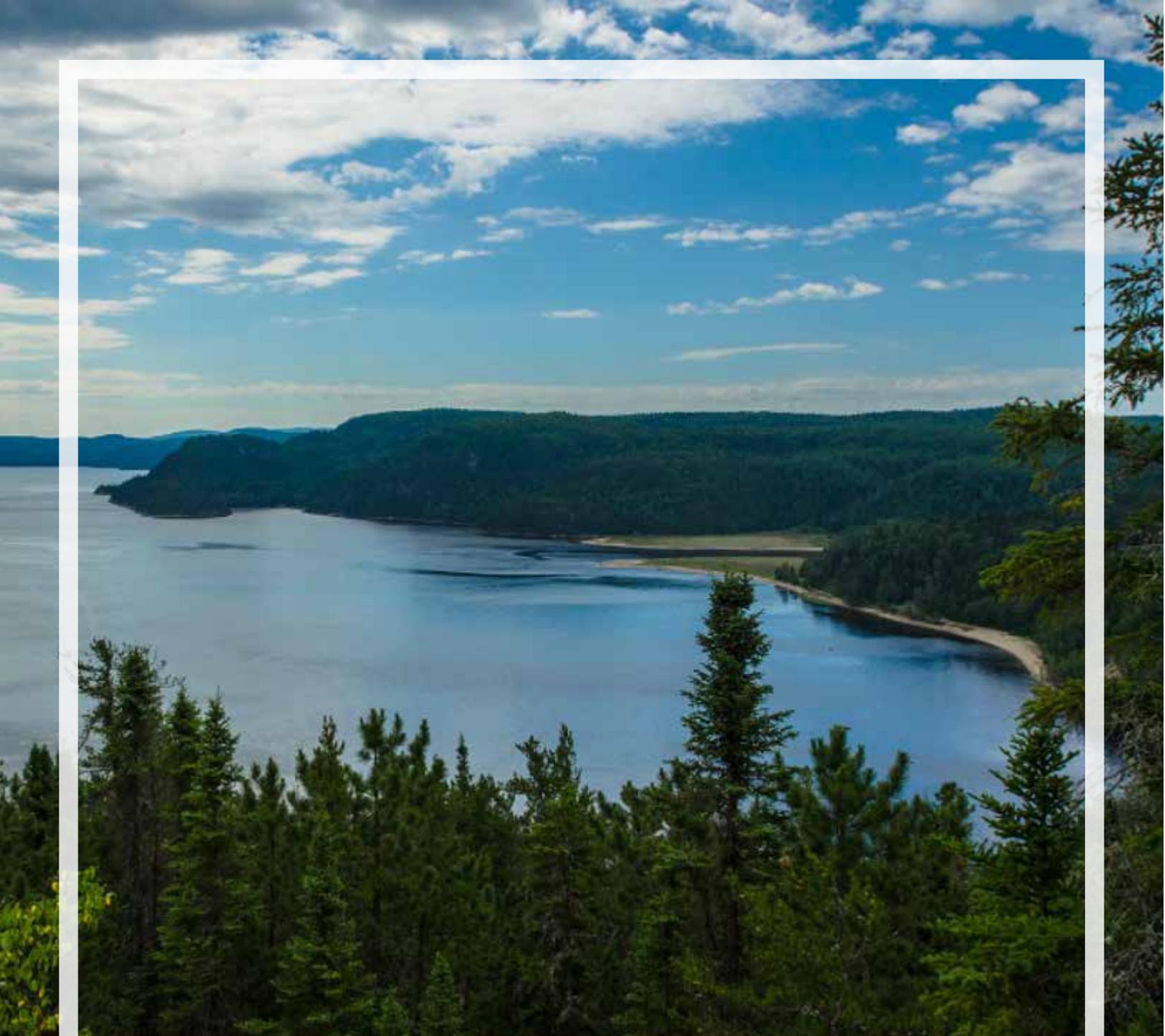
In addition, it is necessary to seek the contribution of citizens, by their actions, but also with their wallets. When a citizen acts, the producers react, and so do the politicians. The only way to initiate concrete change is to increase the number of citizens.

- **To reinforce the message, should we emphasize the economic impact or the environmental impact?**

According to Mr. de Gaspé Beaubien, the economic impact resonates more so with business people, companies and governments, while the environmental impact is felt more so by young people. At this point, it would be wise to start with the environmental impact in order to reach future generations.

#### Recommandations

**Funding and coordination are the key words put forth by Mr de Gaspé Beaubien. A committee of experts on marketing and water could be struck to create funding programs, ensure coordination, and build on existing initiatives. It is imperative that everyone work together for the future of our generation and the generations to come by protecting Canada's freshwater.**



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