

Eau Canada The Future of Canadian Water Governance

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In *Eau Canada: The Future of Canadian Water Governance*, Karen Bakker and colleagues present a rich and compelling case for water as a mounting source of disquiet for Canadians. Public concern focuses on areas such as drinking water safety – highlighted by incidents such as the 2000 disaster in Walkerton, Ontario, environmental degradation from large-scale aquaculture farming, and threats of pollution to recreational water bodies even in national and provincial parks.

The recent case of contaminated drinking water on the Cree First Nation Kashechewan Reserve on the edge of James Bay has led to a flash point with many Canadian water experts feeling that water governance is in a crisis. Although the state of water governance affairs is characterized in a recent report by Canada's Senate as "shocking" and "unacceptable," this book offers hope by pointing to opportunities for innovation and renewal of a better relationship with water.

The intentional focus on water governance and management is justified as the book wrestles with two fundamental questions: What is the state of water governance in Canada? How can we manage our waters more wisely? The volume skillfully brings together the perspective from 28 of Canada's top water experts who debate Canada's most critical water issues and resolutions. The book's objective is to promote an informed debate in all sectors of society about some of the most controversial and pressing water issues facing Canadians. This reality has lent impetus to the decision to pen the book in a way that is comprehensible to the general audience. The public at large, the academic community, water supply managers, environmental and water policy analysts, government

officials, community groups, and politicians from across Canada will find this book a high-quality read.

The range of contributors to this volume is as diverse as the issues involved in water management debates. The first three sections of the book provide readers with an essential background on Canadian water uses, conveying arguments about weaknesses at the heart of Canadian water governance. Authors candidly explore and make controversial arguments over contentious issues, such as jurisdiction, transboundary waters, water exports, and water privatization. The final sections focus on ways to bridge the divide between knowing what to do and taking appropriate action to resolve long-standing issues. Some innovative solutions for sustainable water management are also mapped out, including the potential to achieve national consensus on water policy, water conservation, and pricing. Within this context, the implications of new legal frameworks on Aboriginal people's water rights are sure to spawn debate.

Ms. Bakker skillfully unites diverse tributaries of thought streaming from scientists, researchers, experts, constitutional lawyers, policy analysts, and others. The resulting product gives the interested but non-technical reader a straightforward tool for use in understanding the insidious and complex problems plaguing water governance in Canada. The book also implicitly cries out for government, its direct partners, and Canadians at large to create a more strategic approach to addressing nationally significant freshwater issues. Heeding the advice set out in this manuscript may help bring us closer to understanding what we need in a shared Canadian vision and an effective pan-Canadian policy framework for freshwater management in Canada.

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Note: All web sites were accessed on February 28, 2006 unless indicated otherwise.

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