

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON THE CANADA WATER AGENCY

### OVERVIEW

The Government of Canada, through Environment and Climate Change Canada, has been leading engagement with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit on the development of the Canada Water Agency. Environment and Climate Change Canada will bring forward recommendations to Cabinet on the mandate and structure of the Canada Water Agency, although no date has been confirmed. This engagement will carry over to inform the operations of the Canada Water Agency.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is engaging with Indigenous peoples to:

- identify and reflect the relationships, knowledge systems, concerns and interests of Indigenous peoples related to fresh water, including aquatic ecosystems, groundwater and ice, in the development and operations of the Canada Water Agency;
- understand freshwater challenges and opportunities of Indigenous peoples; and
- solicit views on the mandate, roles and priorities for the Canada Water Agency.

A multi-pronged approach to engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit is being undertaken. The national Indigenous engagement approach prioritizes nation-to-nation, government-to-government and Inuit-Crown partnerships. Engagement is also occurring with Indigenous organizations and regional bodies.

To date, ECCC has informed 113 Indigenous Nations and organizations about engagement on the Canada Water Agency. In addition to the national Indigenous engagement process, ECCC will host small, in-depth virtual roundtables with individuals that have expertise on topics that would help inform the development of Indigenous components of the Canada Water Agency.

### QUESTIONS (Q) & ANSWERS (A)

#### Q1: What is the scope of Indigenous engagement on the Canada Water Agency?

**A:** Environment and Climate Change Canada is engaging with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit on the development of the Canada Water Agency. Environment and Climate Change Canada wishes to respect nation-to-nation, government-to-government and Inuit-Crown partnerships in this engagement process; however, engagement with other Indigenous governments, organizations and regional bodies is possible as long as resources remain available.

At this time, there is no mandate for the creation or amendment of legislation or regulations; however, recommendations will be accepted and considered in what the Government of Canada brings forward to Cabinet on the creation of the Canada Water Agency.

Input and recommendations from Indigenous peoples will be considered in determining the roles and priorities for the Canada Water Agency. The Discussion Paper, [Towards the Creation of a Canada Water](#)

[Agency](#), can serve as a basis for input, but the scope of Indigenous engagement will not be limited to the Discussion Paper. Environment and Climate Change Canada is open to co-developing engagement materials. Input and perspectives on topics specific to First Nations, Métis and Inuit will be sought through this engagement, including, but not limited to:

- **Priorities** – Seeking thoughts on priorities, gaps, challenges and opportunities in relation to freshwater management.
- **Rights** – Assessing how the Canada Water Agency might fit in with Canada’s approaches to respecting Indigenous rights and related interests – including Section 35 rights, honouring treaties and agreements, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Governance** – Examining models, including co-management and self-governance, of collaborative and inter-jurisdictional governance with Indigenous peoples that could inform or be applied to the Canada Water Agency.
- **Structure** – Seeking perspectives on existing or potential programs, advisory mechanisms and policies that could inform the Canada Water Agency’s structure and operations.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Systems** – Learning about the opportunities and concerns about the potential roles of Indigenous knowledge systems, data and information in the Canada Water Agency.
- **Community connections** – Contemplating how the Canada Water Agency can reflect the unique relationships and responsibilities related to fresh water of various community members (women, elders, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc.) in Indigenous communities.
- **Coordination** – Assessing how the Canada Water Agency could be coordinated with other federal initiatives or Crown-Indigenous partnerships.

## Q2: Who else has been engaged?

**A:** Engagement on the Canada Water Agency with stakeholders and the public ended on March 1, 2021. Engagement with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit is continuing in 2021-2022 and beyond.

Throughout the stakeholder and public engagement, Canadians emphasized the importance of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. They underscored the important role a Canada Water Agency can play in applying Indigenous knowledge to decision making, involving Indigenous peoples in freshwater governance and addressing freshwater challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Canada. The What We Heard report for Stakeholder and Public engagement can be found [here](#).

## Q3: Access to safe drinking water for First Nations communities is a significant issue. How will the Canada Water Agency support addressing safe drinking water issues?

**A:** The Government of Canada is committed to working in partnership with First Nations to provide safe drinking water solutions, recently announcing additional investments to accelerate action and support long-term solutions. The Canada Water Agency engagement process is distinct from initiatives related to safe drinking water that are being led by Indigenous Services Canada. Federal departments and agencies are coordinating internally to share information and avoid duplicative processes.

**Q4: Is there capacity funding available to engage on the Canada Water Agency commitment?**

**A:** Capacity funding is available to support engagement with Indigenous peoples. There is no mandatory template for requesting funding and Indigenous governments and organizations interested in capacity funding to support their engagement on the Canada Water Agency can email [water-eau@ec.gc.ca](mailto:water-eau@ec.gc.ca) for more information and for a sample proposal. Proposals will be considered as long as funding is available.

**Q5: What are the timelines and next steps for creation for the Canada Water Agency?**

**A:** No date has been established for the creation of the Canada Water Agency. The input received through engagement activities will inform the development and operations of the Canada Water Agency. It is possible that engagement projects may not be completed before the Agency is created. Canada is committed to meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples on the Canada Water Agency and will ensure input received is appropriately reflected in the Canada Water Agency's activities and decisions, which will evolve over time.