

5 reasons why the Trudeau government must protect Every Lake, Every River

Before being elected, the Trudeau government promised to reinstate federal protections for lakes and rivers in Canada after they were gutted by the previous Harper government. The Harper government's harmful legacy on water has left 99% of lakes and rivers unprotected in Canada.

In March 2017, the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities released a report recommending the government leave the 99% of lakes and rivers unprotected under the Navigation Protection Act (NPA), formerly the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA). In July 2017, the Trudeau government agreed with the committee's recommendation. Transport Canada says it will provide a process to add navigable waters to the schedule of lakes and rivers. However, there is concern the process could be so laborious and restrictive that it could effectively exclude certain lakes and rivers from the act for good. It also puts the onus on communities to make the case to put protections back on waterways when it is the federal government's responsibility to protect them.

It is up to all of us to send a strong message to Members of Parliament that all lakes and rivers must be protected. Email, call or set up a meeting with your Member of Parliament and urge them to protect vulnerable waterways.

Here are five key points you can make about the importance of protecting every lake and every river:

1. 99% of lakes and rivers are unprotected. Right now, 99% of lakes and rivers in Canada are unprotected under the NPA. This means that dam, mining, logging, fish farm and other projects on unprotected waterways are moving forward without assessment of how they affect lakes, rivers and people's right to navigate waterways. Communities use lakes and rivers for fishing, paddling, boating, recreation and tourism. Tell your Member of Parliament how you, your family and your community use your local lake or river.



Water campaigner Emma Lui at Cultus Lake.
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2. Trudeau promised to restore water protections during the last federal election. The federal Liberal's 2015 platform promised voters that they would restore and strengthen freshwater protections. Their platform stated, "Stephen Harper's changes to the Fisheries Act, and his elimination of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, have weakened environmental protections. We will review these changes, restore lost protections, and incorporate more modern safeguards." People from coast-to-coast-to-coast voted for the "real change" the Liberals promised. If you have a Liberal MP, remind them about their promise to restore lost water protections like those under the NWPA.

3. Communities want all lakes and rivers protected. In February 2017, the Council of Canadians delivered 10,000 signed petitions calling on the Trudeau government to restore and enhance the NWPA. The petition called for all lakes, rivers and waterways to be fully protected, for the government to incorporate the obligation to obtain free, prior and informed consent, as required by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, into the NWPA, and for the implementation of strict safeguards for waterways to uphold the United Nations-recognized human right to water and sanitation.

More than 250 submissions were made to the Standing Committee, including dozens of submissions from First Nations and Indigenous organizations such as the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, as well as organizations like Ecojustice, Lake Ontario Waterkeepers, Wilderness Canoe Association and West Coast Environmental Law. Many submissions called for respect for Indigenous title and rights and for protections to be restored and enhanced.

4. Pipelines and other projects are threatening lakes and rivers. In 2012, the former Harper government removed federal scrutiny of large pipelines and powerlines under the NWPA. The Standing Committee recommends that Transport Canada be included in the decision-making on environmental assessments for pipelines and power lines that cross navigable waters. It is unclear what this means and whether reviews will be conducted for all waterways. Ask your Member of Parliament for clarification.

Trudeau's government has already given the green light to tar sands pipelines such as Kinder Morgan's TransMountain and Enbridge's Line 3, as well as TransCanada's NOVA Gas pipeline that will transport fracked gas from northeastern B.C. to Alberta. The Kinder Morgan pipeline crosses 1,309 waterways in B.C. and Alberta, many of which are not on the Schedule of protected waterways. Tell your Member of Parliament about your concerns about how pipeline or other projects will affect local waterways.

5. Navigation, clean water and the environment are linked. There is an intimate link between navigation, clean waterways and environmental protection. Ecojustice has pointed out, "The interrelationship between navigation and the environment is such that the protection of the former consistently promotes the health of the latter."

The 2010 Enbridge oil spill in the Kalamazoo River in Michigan polluted local waterways and affected navigation. The spill leaked thick tar-like substance into the river for 17 hours before the pipeline was shut down. To date, more than \$1 billion has been spent on cleanup, which continues to this day. After the spill, sections of the river and Morrow Lake remained closed to recreational use and boating for nearly two years. Sections of the river also remained closed for dredging operations to retrieve some of the sub-

merged diluted bitumen more than three years after the spill. Talk to your Member of Parliament about how clean waterways are needed for navigation (paddling, transportation or fishing), and how they link to clean drinking water and a healthy environment.

Other countries look at water differently

Around the same time the Canadian government decided to leave lakes and rivers without protections New Zealand granted its Whanganui River the same legal rights as a human being. Days later, India legally recognized the Yamuna and Ganges rivers as "living entities." These historic decisions make the intrinsic connection between life and water.

There is nothing more important than clean water. We must urge Members of Parliament to acknowledge this by putting protections back on every lake and every river in Canada.

To find out more about the Council of Canadians' Every Lake, Every River campaign and to sign the petition, visit our website at canadians.org/EveryLakeEveryRiver or call us toll-free at 1-800-387-7177.



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