

WATER CAUCUS RESPONSE TO DRAFT WATER STRATEGY

General Points of Consensus

- A water strategy for the province is critical and it must be done right
- Water is a great unifier – we all use it, we need a focused, integrated approach
- All the options presented in the draft strategy should comprise elements of a water strategy; but a list of options is not a strategy.
- This draft strategy is trying to manage a resource, while what we really need is province-wide watershed-based land use planning. Water tells the story of what we do to our land. We want to protect our water; therefore we need to take better care of the land.

Problems and Concerns with Draft Water Strategy

- The water strategy lacks a fundamental framework and underlying philosophy; rather, it is a list of options without any direction for prioritization, implementation and evaluation.
- No indication that the watershed is integral to managing the quality and quantity of water.
- Lack of access for the public to participate in this stage of the process: the draft strategy is not on the website, and there are few options for public participation
- Lack of details on enforcement of regulations and mitigation of problems
- Weak/non-assertive language
- No clear indication how policy options will help address problems
- No direction for water allocation during periods of drought as a result of climate change

What the Water Caucus would like to see

- Establish watershed-based land-use planning across the province
- Enact well-enforced legislation that protects watercourses from pollution and degradation
- Align provincial policies that impact water (Water Strategy, Coastal Development Policy, Wetland Conservation Policy, Natural Resource Management Strategy) through a watershed approach
- Ensure Water Strategy is accountable by reporting on ecological, governance and economic performance
- Set water conservation goals and water allocation priorities to prepare for a changing climate
- Reform water governance to facilitate and support greater sustainable participation from watershed groups

Assessment of draft provincial Water Strategy
VS
Recommendations in Blueprint for Water Management

Blueprint for Water Management		Contained in Water Strategy?
Leadership and Direction	1. Show leadership and joint responsibility	No: Other agency involvement and collaboration missing
	2. Manage at a watershed level	No: No indication of managing or land-use planning at a watershed level
	3. Enable regional NSE Staff to assist watershed groups, “ground-truth” planning maps, set and enforce regulations	Yes but Poor: Acknowledges community groups and regional forums, but missing implementation with NGOs and institutionalizing their role within government (there should be an arms-length, independent body with mission-critical status)
Strong Foundation for Science and Monitoring	4. Develop indicators to assess ecosystem integrity including water quality	Partially: water quality as a goal but not explicitly monitoring ecosystem integrity
	5. Standardize monitoring protocols and link with community involvement	Yes: Acknowledges indicators and standards (p. 12), builds capacity for water monitoring (p. 6)
	6. Set water quality goals for primary watersheds* and management plans to meet goals	No: Watershed-specific goals not present in draft strategy (* 46 primary watersheds as mapped in the ‘Water for Life’ report)
	7. Incorporate best practices into well-enforced regulations	Yes: p. 7, mentions best management practices, p. 6 “improve protection measures...” to reduce negative impacts i.e. buffer zones, risk assessments etc... Regulation should be more explicit. Recommendation to allow for regulating and enforcing provincial statements of interest in the Municipal Government Act (Service NS).

Create a Culture of Conservation and Stewardship	8. Create a Watershed Management Fund and source it through income from water allocation permitting	No: No Watershed Management Fund. Set fees for all water takings and direct to water revenue instead of general revenue. Fees should incentivize conservation: make basic water use affordable and increase fees for excessive use.
	9. Provide sustainable support for watershed groups through alternate funding models	No: p. 12 and p. 3, no money for supporting watershed groups
	10. Adopt a water soft path approach for water conservation at a provincial level	Yes: p. 10, promote best practices for water efficiency and conservation to meet new water needs, i.e. amended building code. Need to allocate water for ecosystem use and provide real incentives for conservation.
	11. Formalize role of community-based watershed groups in water strategy	No: p. 12 talk about forums but there is no structure and formalized role for community-based watershed groups in water strategy, need participatory democracy. Conservation Authority model in Ontario is a good model NS should adopt – allows for participatory democracy
	12. Manage water, wetlands and coasts as connected systems and integrate water, wetland and coastal policies	No: No mention of wetland policy, coastal strategy nor natural resource strategy. Need for citizen-based advisory groups on wetlands, coasts, & water, need for a better integrated approach