



September 14, 2007

Katherine Levitt, Program Director
Council of Canadian Academies
180 Elgin Street, suite 1401
Ottawa, ON, K2P 2K3

Re: Pollution Probe Submission to Expert Panel on Groundwater

Dear Ms Levitt

Pollution Probe is a non-profit charitable organization established in 1969 that works in partnership with all sectors of society to protect health by promoting policies for clean air and clean water. In defining environmental problems and advocating practical solutions we draw upon sound science and technology, mobilize scientists and other experts, and build partnerships with industry, governments and communities.

Pollution Probe is pleased to offer this submission to the Expert Panel on Groundwater. Our submission is informed significantly by our experience over the last year in initiating and leading the *Water Policy in Canada: National Workshop Series*. This initiative was based on a progressive series of five invitation-only national workshops held across Canada for decision-makers, experts and key influencers in the water and related sectors. The workshop was co-sponsored by several federal and provincial agencies and institutions including Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Water Network, foundations, universities and others. It heard almost 70 expert presentations and benefited by the involvement of several hundred participants in total.

In April, 2007, Pollution Probe released a report entitled *Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada*. This report began as a background document for the first workshop and was updated following each of the five workshops in order to reflect the presentations and debates and to seed the next workshop discussion. It represents the collective wisdom and experience of hundreds of water policy professionals to provide a foundation for moving forward with a common vision and strategy for water policy in Canada. Groundwater was an important focus of the water policy workshop series, but not an exclusive one. Groundwater was generally viewed in the context of freshwater science and policy in the larger sense, including ground and surface water interaction.

Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada was produced as a summary report of the findings of the workshop series. It calls for a new vision and strategy for water policy in Canada, and a new approach to water management. I would

offer this report to the Expert Panel as a broad contribution to your important examination of the science needed to help achieve sustainable management of Canada's groundwater resources. We would be pleased to make extra copies of the report available for Expert Panel members; and, the report is also available for free download at: <http://www.pollutionprobe.org/Reports/WPWS%20Final%20Report%202007.pdf> . Copies of speaker presentations from each of the workshops are available at <http://www.pollutionprobe.org/Happening/events.htm> . Several of these presentations deal with the subjects of groundwater and science.

Pollution Probe will soon be releasing a complementary document to the *Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada* report that will present our vision and strategy for water management in Canada.

In responding very briefly to the questions you have posed, I would draw your attention, in particular to Section D of *Towards a Vision and Strategy for Water Management in Canada*. Research, monitoring and science needs were a key theme of the water workshop series.

1. What are the opportunities, challenges or emerging crises for sustainable groundwater management in Canada? *There are very many opportunities and challenges but Pollution Probe would be hesitant to say that we are in a state of emerging crisis. Certainly, there are issues of both groundwater quality and quantity right across the Country, and one particular concern is the connection between groundwater, surface water and the increasing impacts of climate change. This issue certainly has important science and policy implications and needs.*

2. Do important gaps exist in knowledge or access to knowledge on groundwater issues? If so, what are they? *Yes, important gaps in knowledge and access to knowledge exist, in particular on the state of groundwater resources in Canada.*

3. Are there important gaps in the application of existing knowledge on groundwater? If so, what are they? *A consistent framework for monitoring and data collection and the application of appropriate standards for data, meta-data, mapping and web-based services are required.*

4. Are there gaps in capacity (e.g. infrastructure, appropriate skills, information systems, regulatory frameworks) for sustainably managing groundwater in Canada? *There are very significant gaps in capacity. I would draw your attention, in particular to Section D of the report. Research, monitoring and science capacity needs were a key theme of the water workshop series.*

5. What should the priorities for filling the gaps be? *One suggestion that was made during the workshop series was that it may be more important to address the needs of people consuming groundwater known to be contaminated, before investing in the considerable resources to undertake complete mapping of all aquifers.*

6. Are there jurisdictions or particular situations in Canada which are exemplary (i.e. cases where groundwater is managed in particularly successful or innovative ways)? *Pressures of freshwater supply and challenges of water quality that are found particularly in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have stimulated innovative approaches that bear consideration. Good examples exist across Canada, however.*

7. Do you have any additional concerns or insights on the management of groundwater in Canada which you believe would be helpful to the Expert Panel? *We believe that the management of groundwater in Canada is a very important issue that should be an integral part and in the context of a whole new approach to water management in Canada that should include a fresh national freshwater vision and strategy. The findings of our workshop series suggest the general directions that Canadians are already taking and suggesting in that regard. Pollution Probe will be prepared to comment more on this subject.*

In closing, I would like to confirm:

- This submission is on behalf of Pollution Probe.
- Pollution Probe would be comfortable if it were to be made public.
- We would be pleased to be listed as a contributor.
- We would be pleased to be contacted by the Council in relation to our submission.

Sincerely,

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