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## Prominent scientists, environmentalists decry cuts to public sector and their effect on Canada's freshwater heritage

Anonymous. **Canada NewsWire** [Ottawa] 04 July 2011.

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### Abstract (summary)

"The [Stephen Harper] government is clearly abandoning its responsibility to steward our freshwater heritage for future generations. All life and livelihoods come from our watersheds and ecosystems, and this government is abandoning them to fend for themselves," says Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians.

"These cuts represent a real and present danger to community health, ecosystem function and our economic future. In effect these cuts may represent a significant form of downloading, as problems ignored today will only manifest in our communities tomorrow - with local and provincial governments needing to step in and do the heavy lifting at potentially massive future costs," says Oliver M. Brandes, co-director of the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance.

### Full Text

OTTAWA, July 4, 2011 /CNW/ - Prominent scientists, environmentalists and groups issued a statement addressed to Prime Minister Stephen Harper today decrying cuts to Environment Canada and the impact they will have on Canada's freshwater sources.

The statement is endorsed by nearly 50 environmental, social justice, women's and First Nations organizations, including the Council of Canadians, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, International Institute of Concern for Public Health, Keepers of the Athabasca Watershed Council, Metis Women's Circle, Mining Watch Canada, National Council of Women of Canada, National Network on Environments and Women's Health, Polaris Institute, Public Service Alliance of Canada, and Sierra Club Canada, among others.

The Harper government has targeted up to \$1.6 billion in cuts to environmental initiatives, and cuts of up to 1,211 jobs and \$222 million from Environment Canada alone. The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada and the Public Service Alliance of Canada warn the departure of dozens of scientists and technicians could hamper Canada's ability to protect our water supplies across the country.

The letter, which will be posted at [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org), calls for the Harper government to cancel budget cuts to Environment Canada and rather invest in freshwater protection in Canada.

#### STATEMENTS

"The Harper government is clearly abandoning its responsibility to steward our freshwater heritage for future generations. All life and livelihoods come from our watersheds and ecosystems, and this government is abandoning them to fend for themselves," says Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians.

"These cuts represent a real and present danger to community health, ecosystem function and our economic future. In effect these cuts may represent a significant form of downloading, as problems ignored today will only manifest in our communities tomorrow - with local and provincial governments needing to step in and do the heavy lifting at potentially massive future costs," says Oliver M. Brandes, co-director of the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance.

"In these times when human activity is altering the properties of the planet on a geological scale, as documented in *The Economist*, we need far more information on the state of the planet and the potential consequences. It makes no sense to be cutting back on scientific work in the name of the economy, when the economic consequences of what is happening to the biosphere will be immense," says David Suzuki, emeritus professor of zoology, University of British Columbia.

"We should be dealing seriously with emerging problems now so that as our population grows and our climate changes our social and economic future is not limited by water availability and quality problems we could have and should have addressed while it was easier and less expensive to do so," says Bob Sandford, chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative in support of the United Nations Water for Life Decade.

"The Great Lakes, in serious need of funding to deal with invasive species, climate change, over-extraction and pollution, should not be punished with further cuts if they are to be saved," says Ralph Pentland, acting chairman of the Canadian Water Issues Council.

"Going forward, our environment, our health and our prosperity will require that Canada manage water better and these cuts will cripple Canada's ability to do that," says Randy Christensen, lawyer with Ecojustice.

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