



University of Victoria's POLIS Project Two Page Summary of Key priorities for the B.C. Watershed Security Strategy (and Fund)

It is well understood that a Watershed Security Strategy and Fund have significant potential to change how landscapes are managed and stewarded into the future. The Intentions Paper provides a comprehensive list of possible actions and opportunities that all align well with priorities and mandates already identified in policy documents, we organize our specific advice as follows:

Actions that must start now:

There are many Initiatives that already have momentum and clear direction, and simply need action. These actions should be done concurrently with the ongoing development of the strategy—and then reinforced in the strategy itself.

1. **Accelerate *Water Sustainability Act* implementation, including core policy, regulations, and decision-making tools..**
2. **Resource and implement a coherent and integrated provincial planning regime for land and water that is consistent with UNDRIP and B.C.'s *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA).**
3. **Fulfill established drinking water source protection recommendations from the Auditor General (2019) and Hullcar Aquifer Review (2017) including:**
4. **Build on *Watershed Security Fund* immediately with further reinvestment (including in budget 2023), resource rentals, with matching Federal government investment.**
5. **Address gaps in drought response, and groundwater protection and existing climate and forestry commitments**

Several of the most crucial themes noted in the paper include:

- 1.1 Enhance local watershed governance *including dispute resolution mechanisms for watershed governance arrangements*
- 2.1 Align the *Water Sustainability Act* and new and related policies with the UN Declaration and *recognize First Nations as first users*
- 2.2 Co-developing a provincial environmental flows regulations that includes cultural values & protection of core rights
- 3.2 Improve understanding of water and watershed use, ecosystem needs and related cumulative effects
- 4.1 Empowering Indigenous people to trigger relevant water and watershed management tools under *Water Sustainability Act*
- 4.2 Strengthen regulations, standards and policy to protect and prioritize water values in decision making ... and *establish wetland policy and objectives*
- 4.4 Ensure “wild salmon lens” in watershed management and use allocations
- 5.1 *Source to Tap Strategy, Water Sustainability Plans* and *Water Objectives* for regional pressures and risk



Substantive and ongoing reforms:

Reforms to begin when the strategy is released

- 1. Focus on a Watershed Governance Framework.** Develop clear guidance and a framework for watershed governance that includes resources and direction for local watershed boards/entities.
- 2. Build an Indigenous water knowledge and provincial science strategy that includes monitoring and State-of-Watershed Reporting (with watershed assessments and focused “watershed lens” on all statutory decision-making).**
- 3. Kick-start the next wave of necessary, complementary policy and regulatory components through a focus on a wetlands and an Environmental Flows regulation**
- 4. Strengthen Accountability and Oversight.**

Substantive and ongoing reform – work commences within one year of the release of the Strategy

- 5. DRIPA-aligned Water Sustainability Act reform, which fundamentally addresses FITFIR & co-governance concerns**
- 6. Fully integrate decision and regulator tools.** Submission to the B.C. Ministry of Land, Water, and Resource Stewardship