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Questions on how water is used, abused

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British Columbia needs to get a better handle on how much water is being used and possibly polluted in the province, states a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

"I think the government is really operating in the dark when it comes to having a true understanding of water withdrawals," said Ben Parfitt, the report's author.

Mr. Parfitt said when he researched the topic, he found it troubling that many industries aren't required to meter water used and that there is no government agency keeping track of the overall usage of water in the province.

He said the government is also failing to charge adequately for water that is used in huge volumes by industry.

"The most that an energy company would pay ... under water licences would be a token fee of \$2.75 per Olympic swimming pool withdrawn," said Mr. Parfitt, a policy analyst. "And there are cases right now in the northeast of the province where you have on a single [gas] well site up to 600 Olympic swimming pools being [used for fracking] ... where the total cost is 0 dollars."

He said the gas industry pollutes much of the water it uses.

The report calls on the government to appoint one provincial agency to gather

information on water use, to require that all major water users meter their water use and to increase water-use fees.

Staff

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