



PREPARE FOR TOMORROW: A proposed Watershed Security Fund would create an enduring legacy for British Columbia

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Editor’s Context:

“For centuries and indeed millenniums, great plagues and other severe shocks have shaped political preferences and decision-making by those in charge. And history teaches us that these choices can change societies in very different ways. Yet the most important lesson of history endures. The impact of any pandemic goes well beyond lives lost and commerce curtailed,” wrote Walter Scheidel, a professor of classics and history at Stanford University, [in an Op-Ed published by the NY Times](#).

*The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a life-altering moment for every British Columbian. It also represents a ‘moment of opportunity’ because minds are now open to breaking with past practices. Thus, the historical perspective by Walter Scheidel provides a useful backdrop for consideration of a bold idea to establish a **Watershed Security Fund for British Columbia**, and create an enduring legacy.*

Look Beyond the Pandemic and Implement Actionable Visions for Change

“In this issue of Waterbucket News, the Partnership for Water Sustainability features an article contributed by Tim Morris, Project Director, [BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative](#). Top of mind is food security, and security of the supply chain, during the current pandemic. So too should watershed security be a top priority for government, posits Tim Morris in the article,” states Kim Stephens, Partnership Executive Director and Waterbucket News Editor.



“The BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative is a strategic project of the BC Water Funders Collaborative, a group of funding organizations working together to help advance water protection in British Columbia. By 2030, the vision of the Initiative funders is that all freshwater ecosystems in British Columbia will be in good health as a result of world-class leadership in watershed governance.

“The approach of the BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative is to invest in partnerships with local leaders—in governments, First Nations, watershed organizations, and community groups—who know their local waterways the best and are working to ensure these waters sustain the life within them and the communities that depend upon them.”



OVERVIEW: A WATERSHED SECURITY FUND FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA

Building Resilience & Advancing Reconciliation

OCTOBER 2019

DOWNLOAD A COPY: <https://poliswaterproject.org/files/2019/11/Watershed-Security-Fund-Position-Paper-1.pdf>

“A Watershed Security Fund offers an opportunity for government to deliver effectively on multiple commitments and would provide a mechanism to integrate policy priorities at a landscape level,” states Tim Morris, Project Director, BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative

British Columbia’s Watershed Security under Threat

“50 years ago, BC’s political leaders took bold action to secure our farmland by creating the British Columbia Agricultural Land Reserve. This act of vision and courage created a legacy of food security that still benefits British Columbians today,” states Tim Morris, Project Director, BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative.



“But securing our farmland was only half the job: just like farmland is the source of our food security, healthy watersheds are key to our water security. Now, with climate change destabilizing our fresh water sources, adding droughts, fires and floods to the existing threats of contamination and reckless resource development, it’s time to take bold action once again to secure and sustain our critical fresh water sources forever.

The Choices:

“B.C. currently faces a fork in the river. On the one hand, business-as-usual will see the health of our watersheds further degrade—in some cases reaching tipping points with irreparable impacts. On the other hand, the Province has an opportunity to choose a different way forward—a path that gets ahead of watershed threats and creates a powerful and enduring legacy for communities across B.C.”

Four organizations collaborated to produce the Position Paper:



Building Resilience and Advancing Reconciliation

Released in November 2019 by a consortium of water-centric organizations, a new [Watershed Security Fund Position Paper](#) describes how the provincial government could build resilience, advance reconciliation and create an enduring legacy for freshwater in B.C.

The Position Paper was a response to a direct recommendation in the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services’ Budget 2020 Consultation Report (August 2019), which recommended that the Province:

Building on this recommendation, the Position Paper is intended to support policy makers and advance the public dialogue on this important opportunity. The paper outlines the urgent need for a dedicated **Watershed Security Fund for British Columbia**. It describes the rationale for such a fund, provides an overview of benefits and examples of the activities it would support, and outlines technical details on options for Fund structure, funding mechanisms, and governance.

Opportunity for an Enduring Legacy for British Columbia

The Position Paper emphasizes that watershed security is linked to a suite of Provincial mandates and priorities related to land, economy, and reconciliation. This creates several challenges. A Watershed Security Fund offers an opportunity, says Tim Morris, for government to deliver effectively on multiple commitments and would provide a mechanism to integrate policy priorities at a landscape level:

- **Reconciliation in Action:** A Watershed Security Fund would enable Indigenous communities to build the capacity necessary to implement Indigenous policies, laws and governance structures, while working with the Province and non-Indigenous communities to undertake collaborative land and water stewardship.
- **Healthy & Resilient Communities:** Through investments in watershed planning and climate adaptation, a Watershed Security Fund greatly would improve the ability of rural communities to secure their drinking water sources and build climate resilience.

- **Robust Local Economies:** Rural economies historically dependent on resource extraction are suffering from industry downsizing or closures. A Watershed Security Fund would catalyze local economic development: from new jobs and training programs in restoration and monitoring; to leveraging private sector investment in innovative water technologies; to supporting farmers and sustainable agriculture.
- **Freshwater Habitat for Fish and Wildlife:** Through investments in restoration, conservation, and environmental flow protection, a Watershed Security Fund would ensure critical habitat is safeguarded for salmon survival and other fish and wildlife.

“At a time of unprecedented climatic and economic disruptions, the Province has a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate global leadership. **Through a Watershed Security Fund, the provincial government can make a legacy investment in British Columbian communities that will resonate for generations.**”

“A Watershed Security Fund would meaningfully advance reconciliation with First Nations and enable innovative partnerships with towns, farmers, businesses and local groups. It would provide a major boost to the health and resilience of communities throughout the province,” concludes Tim Morris.

Quotable Quotes



“First Nations communities often lack the necessary financial resources to meet the demands placed upon them from Crown governments and industry, and to proactively develop and implement their own water protection plans, policies, and laws. A Watershed Security Fund would provide lasting financial support to First Nations and community partners to build and strengthen their capacity to undertake watershed stewardship, planning and governance activities for the benefit of all British Columbians,” ,” stated **Susi Porter-Bopp**, First Nations Fisheries Council.



“Healthy forests and wetland systems provide a host of watershed services, including water purification, ground water and surface flow regulation, erosion control, and streambank stabilization, to the benefit of fish and wildlife, as well as to the benefit of local communities. A Watershed Security Fund will invest in partnerships and planning that safeguard these important watershed services in the face of climate change and cumulative impacts,” added **Neil Fletcher**, BC Wildlife Federation Wetlands Program Manager.



“First Nations, local governments, and community organizations are leading major freshwater initiatives in this province, but are stymied by a lack of resources and funding. By creating a Watershed Security Fund, the provincial government has a critical opportunity to support watershed partnerships and initiatives that build watershed resilience and make reconciliation commitments real,” concluded **Rosie Simms**, POLIS Water Sustainability Project.

Watershed security is linked to a suite of existing Provincial mandates and priorities related to land, economy, and reconciliation:

