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Open letter on a new BC Water Act

By *Celina*

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This letter was sent to the Premier of British Columbia, the Honourable Christy Clark, and Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Dr. Terry Lake.

Dear Premier Clark,

Re: An Open Letter on a New Water Sustainability Act for BC

The purpose of this letter is to express our support for the development of a new Water Sustainability Act for BC.

The Real Estate Foundation supports real estate and land use practices that contribute to resilient, healthy communities and natural systems. We provide grants and information to non-profit organizations working to enable transformational change in communities throughout British Columbia. Since 1988, the Foundation has invested over \$62 million in land use projects in over 100 BC communities. [Fresh water sustainability](#) ^[1] is one of our three grant making priorities.



In fulfilling the Foundation's mandate, we have the opportunity to work with hundreds of groups throughout the province—non-profit, government, private sector, First Nations and community stakeholders—all working in partnership to support progressive, sustainable land use practices.

Water is critically important to these efforts. The release of the Provincial Government's Living Water Smart Plan in 2008, and its commitment to making progress on Water Act Modernization, has been a catalyst for important research, education and policy initiatives that are contributing to impactful, long term, progressive action on water issues in BC.

For example, over several years, the Real Estate Foundation has funded the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC to support [Convening for Action on Vancouver Island](#) ^[2] and throughout the province. This initiative has brought together local governments, developers, academics, non-governmental organizations and other practitioners, to advance leading practices and promote a collaborative "water-centric" approach to community planning. The program is aligned with the Province's [Water Sustainability Action Plan for BC](#) ^[3], [Living Water Smart Program](#) ^[4] and [Green Communities initiative](#) ^[5].

In 2012, the Real Estate Foundation provided a grant to Simon Fraser University's Adaptation to Climate Change Team [6] to promote sustainable water governance in BC. This multi-disciplinary team is developing education materials for practitioners and other audiences regarding the Water Act Modernization process and renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty.

The Foundation also supported the Summit Institute Society's 2012 Water Gathering Summit [7] on Watershed Governance in BC. The Summit identified a critical need for new systems to support collaborative, community driven watershed governance and actions.

Last spring, we provided funding to the Canadian Fresh Water Alliance [8] to work with non-profit stewardship organizations to build capacity and collaboration in the water stewardship sector, and build public awareness and appreciation for fresh water in BC.

Regional initiatives have also been significant. Examples include: the Fraser Basin Council [9]'s regional workshop series on building capacity for community based water and watershed planning; the Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable [10]'s current watershed planning process; and Mid-Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society [11]'s multi-year initiative on groundwater mapping and education in the Englishman River watershed.

These are just a few examples of the progressive and important work being undertaken throughout BC.

The Provincial Government's Living Water Smart Plan and the modernization of the BC Water Act provide significant potential to improve water management and protect water resources in British Columbia. We ask and encourage you to continue to support the health of fresh water systems, for the benefit of BC communities and natural areas both now and in the future, by bringing this pivotal piece of law reform before the Legislature.

Sincerely,

THE REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION OF BC

Jack Wong
Chief Executive Officer

Pictured: The Columbia River wetlands is the headwaters of the Columbia River and is the longest intact wetland system in North America. The Rocky Mountains are to the east; the Purcells are to the west. (Photo: Leanne Sexsmith)

Source URL: <http://www.refbc.com/open-letter-on-a-new-bc-water-act>

Links:

[1] http://refbc.com/grants/grant_information/focus_areas/fresh_water_sustainability

[2] <http://waterbucket.ca/cfa/>

[3] <http://www.toolkit.bc.ca/resource/waterbucket>

[4] <http://livingwatersmart.ca>

[5] http://www.livesmartbc.ca/community/c_green.html

[6] <http://act-adapt.org>

[7] <http://www.pbli.com/blog?articleid=14>

[8] <http://tidescanada.org/news/new-canadian-freshwater-alliance-project-receives-key-funding-from-rbc-supporting-canadas-freshwater-community/>

[9] <http://www.rethinkingwater.ca>

[10] <http://www.coquitlamriverwatershed.ca/roundtable>

[11] <http://www.mvihes.bc.ca/projects/groundwater-study>