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Subject: Response to Water Modernization Act

Council of Canadians response to the Water Sustainability Act

In the coming decades water will be the most pressing area of environmental and human concern.

It is therefore important that water be viewed as a public trust and a basic human right.

In July 28th, 2010 the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly declared that water and sanitation was a human right.

Water is a global trust to be managed and enforced with regulation by including the protection of water resources and ecosystems.

The proposed Water Sustainability Act must be part of an eventual Canadian comprehensive national water policy. The policy must recognize clean drinking water as a basic human right and the ban of bulk export of fresh water.

The new W S Act must state that water services in local communities can not be privatized. Local governments in BC must pass resolutions and policies that protect and conserve water and declare water as a human right.

The new WSACT and the Agricultural Land Commission are paramount statutes over other land and resource legislation.

Response to the Special Policy Sections of the Proposed W S Act

1. Policy – Protect Stream Health and Aquatic Environments

The protection of stream flows is extremely important in order to support natural balances with the local ecosystems.

The privatization with the Run of the River projects is not to be considered or permitted. Stream and rivers must continue to be public resources.

2. Policy – Consider Water in Land Use Decisions

Great care must be exercised in how much flexibility is permitted regionally and locally in managing our water resources.

Cumulative impacts of the uses of land and water must be assessed within the planning process that involves the government resource agencies and local government.

This area-based framework must be closely tied to Provincial guidelines for natural resource planning and management.

3. Policy – Regulate Groundwater Use

In land use planning for rural areas of BC the cumulative effects of just how many more wells are to be permitted must be thoroughly assessed for quantity and quality.

Local governments are to be guided in water conservation measures and the separation of domestic use and industrial use of water. Industrial activities should provide their own water sources separate from local government public systems.

5 Policy – Improve Security, Water Use Efficiency and Conservation

5.1 Economic Instruments

Tradeable permits are not acceptable and must not be allowed. Such permits would create a water market to the highest bidder. The cumulative purchases of permits would create monopolies for public water resources.

The normal transfer of water licences with ownership changes should be maintained.

5.3 Agricultural Water Reserves

The availability of water and food security are interdependent so that BC moves to self-sufficiency in agricultural production within the various agricultural sectors; linking the water reserves for agriculture within the ALR areas in an important step.

7. Policy – Enable Range of Governance Approaches

Extreme care must be undertaken in delegating authority to local and regional agencies or to local governments. The key here is in the development of water sustainability plans where local water issues can be addressed and management protocols established. All plans must be completed within Provincial water and land policy guidelines.

It is paramount that First Nations be part of the water sustainability plans at local and regional areas and that every effort is to be made to work with the First Nations communities.

This is the position paper endorsed by the Williams Lake Chapter of the Council of Canadians on Feb. 28, 2011.

John Dressler for the Williams Lake Chapter of the Council of Canadians