

## **Water, Fisheries, and Oceans Caucus Meeting – Draft Minutes**

Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006

Montréal, Québec

### **Participants**

Martha Kostuch (Friends of the Oldman River) [martha@rtinc.com](mailto:martha@rtinc.com)

Raymond Parker (NSEN/APWPS) [apwps@xplornet.com](mailto:apwps@xplornet.com)

Parthiban Param (Harmony International) [parthiban@harmonyinternational.org](mailto:parthiban@harmonyinternational.org)

Lindsay Telfer (Sierra Club of Canada) [lindsay@sierraclub.ca](mailto:lindsay@sierraclub.ca)

Gino Lévesque (Comité de valorisation de la rivière Beauport) [glevesque@cvrbc.gc.ca](mailto:glevesque@cvrbc.gc.ca)

Isabel Muzichuk (Concerned Citizens for a Safe & Healthy Environment)

Susan Howatt (Council of Canadians) [showatt@canaidans.org](mailto:showatt@canaidans.org)

Corin Lohmann (Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition) [corin.lohmann@gmail.com](mailto:corin.lohmann@gmail.com)

Olga Schwartzkopf (Soil and Water Conservation Society – BC) [olgams@shaw.ca](mailto:olgams@shaw.ca)

Olivier Bertin-Mahieux (Canadian Environmental Network) [olivier@cen-rce.org](mailto:olivier@cen-rce.org)

### **Introductions and Agenda Review**

After a round of introductions, the Caucus Chair (Martha Kostuch) presented the history of the caucus. An action plan was developed the previous year, but due to lack of funding, actions were limited. There is an interest in a National Water Policy.

After review of the meeting's agenda, all agree to 10 minutes per person to discuss each participant's issues.

Minutes will be forwarded to the whole caucus.

### **Report on the ENGO-DFO Workshop of October 11-12, 2006**

The workshop focused on the Risk Management Framework, the lack of enforcement, the lack of use of CEAA, and bottom trawling.

DFO's original idea was to present the issues to ENGOs. But they ended up listening to ENGO concerns. ENGOs describe the meeting as productive and uplifting. There will be an ENGO report on the meeting and more ENGO-DFO activities in the coming years.

The RCEN will send a call for delegates to form the new Organizing Committee.

All ENGOs present at the caucus meeting agree to place the ENGO-DFO activities under the Water, Fisheries, Oceans Caucus. The RCEN will get funding through a proposal made to DFO.

### **Participants' issues – 10 minutes each**

Raymond Parker:

Is interested in learning about watershed legislation in other regions. Currently, in Nova Scotia there is no watershed legislation in rural areas.

Replies:

- In Québec, a National (provincial) Policy of Water was put in place in 2001, clearly identifying watershed management. Funding is available through a Green Fund. Donations come from water pumping stations.

- Each province faces different water issues. ENGOs deal with a patchwork of jurisdictions. ENGOs complained about the absence of a national legislation and about the licences to water in the West.

Parthiban Param:

Wants to understand ownership of soil water, general comments on ownership and rights to water.

Replies:

- The Council of Canadians introduced a treaty at the UN about trading water. Canada is the only country to vote against freedom of access to water.
- The opposite view is that pricing water drives conservation, particularly for industrial use and irrigation.
- We need to define who has a right to water. Industry jumps on the subject to make sure they get water for free. Some ENGOs don't think industry should have the same right to water as the population. There should be a cost to protect watersheds.
- Problem because the people sitting on a committee might vote for industrial development.

Corin Lohmann:

Is concerned with melting glaciers. They constitute 30% of the annual flow of the Oldman River, but only 4% of the land in Alberta. Obtaining the protection of glaciers is a big issue. When the forest industry cuts down trees, there is less water retention. Currently, the Oil & Gas Industry clears out a lot of forest on the leases. Plus, the ski hills withdraw 30 gallons of water to make snow.

Corin is looking for outreach material to protect watersheds. Who knows what climate change will bring.

Replies:

- It is important to get the water issues in the clean air debate
- Many watershed councils are being set up. It is important to include them in the decision-making process of local development plans.
- In-stream flows need to be established. Understanding the amounts of water needed in rivers will help maintain the watershed habitat. Fish need the right amount of water, light, and oxygen at different times of the year. Each river is different, but it is necessary to establish the levels of water, light, and oxygen needed to maintain the ecosystems.
- ENGOs suggest considering prosecution the Ski Hill under the Fisheries Act, beyond an administrative action, because their action may be a criminal offence.
- The ski resort contributes to climate change because of the trees they cut and the water they pump.
- In Nova Scotia, some groups are showing the Al Gore movie (Inconvenient Truth) to all schools, because through this movie, the public can relate to climate change issues. People begin to understand weather changes and the need for watershed protection.

Lindsay Telfer:

Is new at water policy and would like to know if there are success stories, especially inter-jurisdictional policy successes.

Replies:

- A great federal water policy was developed in 1986. There is a book, but no commitment, because of provincial-federal issues.
- The province of Québec has been doing a good job.
- In Ontario, the Walkerton tragedy triggered changes with a whole summer of hearings. There is a concern about the sustainability of the model.
- The Prairie Provinces Water Board is a successful model, but was implemented in the 1960s. 50% of the flow in Alberta is passed on to Saskatchewan, 50% is then passed on to Manitoba. It works most of the time. Sometimes, the flow in the spring is too fast to be monitored.
- In BC, the switch of Government meant a switch of policy.
- In Saskatchewan, a Watershed committee is being put in place. But it is important to keep sitting on the committee, because some studies show a few misses. Problems will be fixed if there is a general policy in place.

Gino Lévesque:

Wants to know more about water exports outside of borders.

Replies:

- In Nova Scotia, a proposal to ship water to the U.S. was defeated by local citizens.
- Martha Kostuch has all plans for inter basin transfers in Canada. One of them for example shows a trench in the Rockies to send water to the U.S. Another one shows how to turn James Bay into a freshwater lake to transfer water to the U.S.
- Some politicians wanted to go in schools to teach children to ask for more water. There is clearly a growing demand in the U.S. for Canadian water. Under NAFTA, if we ever start exporting water, it can never stop, because water would become a commodity. Under NAFTA, we can't reduce exports once we start, even if we come short locally. Citizens need to be vigilant.
- There is an issue with bottled water. Under NAFTA, small bottles of water (20 liters or less) are not considered a water export. For example, 1 million bottles of water is not considered a water export. Vigilance is required with 2/3 of the U.S. expected to be dried up in the next 10 years.
- ENGOs believe sharing of water is essential as a human right, but not OK to sell it as a commodity. Human rights standards are hard to argue in the case of the U.S., because they have great water reserves and are just wasting them.

Isabel Muzichuk:

Isabel is worried about hog farms in rural municipalities (RM). Tons of gases are produced, which pollute the air, the ground, and the water and soil. Ecosystems are disappearing, putting everybody at risk.

Comments:

- Currently, there are more pigs than humans in Canada
- There is a moratorium in Quebec. But Quebec producers complained about financial difficulties because the competition is driving pork prices down. The Province gives support of 15¢ per pork.
- Hog farms are easily classified as farms to get subsidies, unlike industrial farms, because they require little space. Hog farms are taxed as farms, not as industry.

- In Alberta, hog farms caused air quality standards to be exceeded 22 times in one month. Hog farms currently cause more exceedences in Alberta than Oil and Gas. But the Natural Resources Conservation Board determined it was OK.
- ENGOs should show where hog farming isn't working for communities. A transition from industrial to sustainable farming is necessary, because industrial farming is unsustainable. The legislation should be forced to deal with costs on the environment.

Susan Howatt:

Would like to see a National Water Policy in place. The Prairie Model is a good one. But part of the work is to build political will. Right now, only 2 researchers at Environment Canada working on water issues, compared to a whole team some years ago. Municipalities should receive funding to support their watersheds.

Comments:

- A National plan should be put in place, but that doesn't mean a Federal Government Plan. It means Federal Government + all jurisdictions (First Nations, etc...). We need a collaborative process (hearings, electronic submissions, etc...). Right now, the challenge is funding.
- It would require corporate/Government funding. The Water, Oceans, Fisheries Caucus would surely participate, but it would be a long fight. We should probably find \$100K to start the process.
- The NDP is the only political party right now with a water policy.
- The Council of Canadians was very helpful in bringing people to the World Water day in Nova Scotia.

Martha Kostuch:

Martha works right now on Oil Sands issues and on the renewal of the Fisheries Act.

- The Government is proposing to amend the Fisheries Act. Most amendments deal with fish and fish management. There will be consultations in the coming years.
- The Oil Sands Development in Alberta represents the largest development occurring in the world. Industry wants to go as fast as possible and incredibly large amounts of water are being consumed. The water and the land are now polluted and First Nations can't live on the land anymore. Many rivers and watershed are gone and Oil Sands developments have an impact on climate change. The Oil Sands are the reason why Canada can't meet its Kyoto commitment. Industry wants to triple production in the next 5 years, which has a big impact on water used for mining and processing. The Sierra Club posted pictures of the Oil Sands development on their website. You can see the massiveness of the development on Google Earth, yet only 5% is developed.

Comments:

- The potential Alberta Oil Sands development would be the same size as Florida.
- A summary of environmental issues is being put together, after 170 oral submissions were made from all over the world, on top of written submissions (<http://www.oilsandsconsultations.gov.ab.ca/>).

**Nominations**

Martha Kostuch, Susan Howatt, and Olga Schwartzkopf present themselves for Co-Chair positions on the Water/Fisheries/Oceans Caucus.

Isabel Muzichuk and Corin Lohmann would like to become members of the Steering Committee.

Action: Olivier will send out a call for nominations to the Water/Fisheries/Oceans Caucus. The names of the people above who have indicated their interest in being on the steering committee/co-chairs will be added to the any additional names received from the call for nominations. If a significant number respond, there may have to be a selection process.