



June 1, 2022

Honourable [Minister Name Will Be Added]
Ministry of [Ministry Will Be Added]
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Delivered via email: [Individual Minister Email Will Be Added]

Dear Honourable [LAST NAME],

We are writing to you as Co-Chairs of the BC Watershed Security Coalition, a non-partisan, diverse coalition of 48 organizations representing 255,000 British Columbians from all walks of life. This Coalition has come together out of the recognition that, in every region of this province, healthy watersheds are fundamental to human health, security, prosperity and reconciliation.

The rivers and lakes of British Columbia are the cornerstones of our local economies, our forests, our fish & wildlife, our food crops, our quality of life, our cultural memories, and survival itself.

In the face of last year's devastating climate disasters, it is essential to recognize the important role our watersheds play in providing natural defences to floods, drought, and fires. However, many of BC's watersheds are becoming increasingly degraded due to poorly planned development over the past 20 years which has compounded climate impacts and caused other problems—polluted drinking water, reduced food security, destruction of salmon habitat, and loss of cultural and spiritual values.

Minister (LAST NAME), your government has committed to the creation of a BC Watershed Security Fund, and the time for bold investments in our watersheds has never been more important and urgent. Establishing a Watershed Security Fund in Budget 2023 will help move us beyond billion-dollar disaster response efforts and towards bold and proactive investments in watershed security. The benefits of these investments far outweigh the costs. **B.C. has spent nearly \$11 billion in the last 5 years recovering from the effects of extreme weather, we can and must do better.**

BC needs a Watershed Security Fund with a **sustained annual investment of \$75 million to catalyze the actions required to rebuild our watersheds and experience the benefits they provide.** Benefits that include:

- stronger and more resilient communities that save billions of dollars in the face of future climate disasters, and enjoy a higher quality of life;
- government to government partnerships that enable better watershed planning and collaborative decision making;
- reduced conflict in times of water stress;
- advanced Indigenous rights and reconciliation; and
- thriving local economies with an increase of 13,000+ good new jobs that allow people to stay in their local communities.

We have seen firsthand over the past year the positive impact that investments in our watersheds can have through the highly successful Healthy Watersheds Initiative (HWI). The HWI has helped communities adapt to climate change, created 800 jobs, protected drinking water, and strengthened relationships with First Nations. It has proven that investments in watersheds not only make our communities more resilient, they also attract additional investments leveraging up to \$4 for every \$1 invested.

We have identified four indicators for success: Scale, Sustainability, Indigenous Governance and Flexibility to Regional Needs. By meeting these indicators your government will develop a truly impactful Fund that is supported by approximately 80% of British Columbians. This Fund will enable a powerful and long-lasting legacy of clean drinking water, healthy salmon runs and climate-resilience for communities throughout the province. Please refer to the attached '**The Case For Investing In BC's Watershed**' for more details on these indicators.

Minister (LAST NAME), we are at a critical moment for watershed security in BC. It is essential your government establish a long-term Watershed Security Fund in Budget 2023 that delivers results for the benefit of all British Columbians. **At least \$75 million per year is needed to move beyond billion-dollar disaster response efforts and towards bold and proactive investments in B.C.'s watershed security.** This is an urgent priority for the Watershed Security Coalition and the 255,000 British Columbians we represent, including all the additional signatories below.

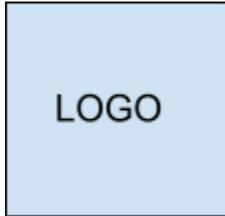
Sincerely,



Coree Tull and Tim Morris
Co-Chairs BC Watershed Security Coalition

Additional Signatories

Add your organization to the letter by filling out the online form below before May 27th
<https://form.typeform.com/to/sMYhhVMW?typeform-source=www.google.com>



FIRST & LAST NAME
POSITION
ORGANIZATION

EMVA



BC
WATERSHED
SECURITY
COALITION

THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN BC'S WATERSHEDS

Rich and abundant watersheds such as the Fraser, Skeena, Peace, Columbia and Cowichan bring life, health, and prosperity to communities in every corner of BC. Our rivers and lakes are the cornerstone of our local economies, our forests, our fish & wildlife, our food crops, our quality of life and survival itself.

Our watersheds provide critical natural defences to floods, droughts and fires, but are increasingly degraded in many parts of the province.

**\$75 Million
Annually**

**BC needs a
Watershed Security Fund
with a sustained investment
to rebuild our watersheds and
all the benefits
they provide**



WHAT IS WATERSHED SECURITY?

Watershed security is about two things:

- 1** Our watersheds provide essential benefits that underpin our economy, health and well-being—clean drinking water, thriving salmon runs, water for growing food, and natural protections against climate disasters.
- 2** The stewardship and actions we take to keep our watersheds healthy, strong and productive so that they continue to provide these services.



WHY WE CAN'T WAIT TO INVEST

Last year provided a devastating reminder of the costs of our changing climate and increasingly severe floods, droughts and forest fires. Poorly planned development over the past 20 years has compounded these impacts and caused other problems—polluted drinking water, reduced food security, destruction of salmon habitat, and loss of cultural and spiritual values.



THE PATH TO WATERSHED SECURITY

What Will an Annual Budget of \$75 Million Achieve?

There are three priority investment areas that will strengthen community resilience and support better decisions for the benefit of all British Columbians:



REBUILD NATURAL DEFENCES

Healthy watersheds provide critical natural defences against the climate crisis: wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing and purifying water; natural streambanks filter polluted run-off and provide shade to spawning salmon; mature forests hold back snow and rain in the winter and release it when it's needed most.



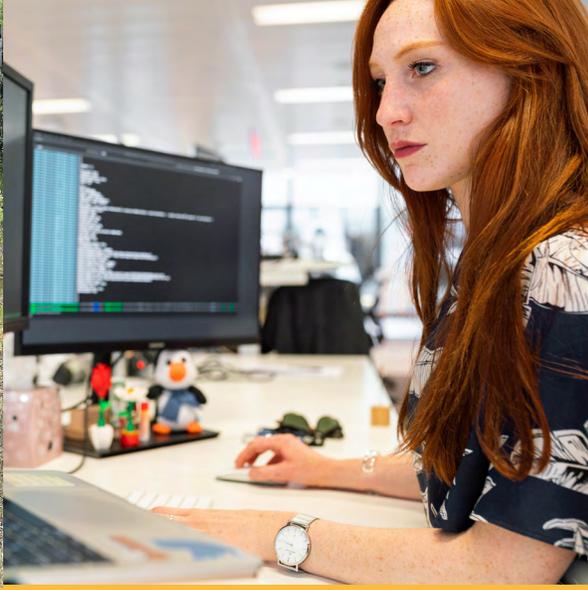
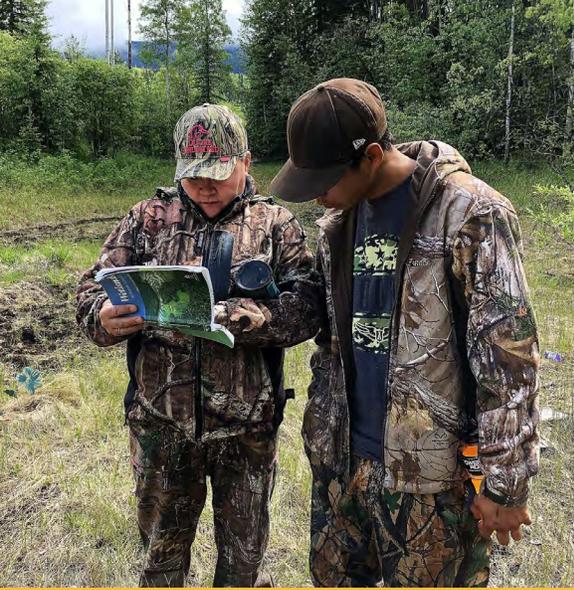
STRENGTHEN WATERSHED GOVERNANCE

Governance is organizing the way we work together to make better decisions at the right scale, involving the people that live in watersheds and know them best. It's relationship building in a deep way, between Crown and Indigenous Nations, governments and communities, and the various interests that have a stake in our watersheds.



BOLSTER COLLABORATIVE MONITORING

We can't effectively manage what we don't measure. Collaborative watershed monitoring grounded in both Indigenous knowledge and western science is the only way to ensure we are making the right decisions, at the right time, and investing where we need it the most.



WORKING FOR WATERSHEDS JOBS & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

BC's existing watershed sector supports 27,000 jobs across a diversity of professions from planners, to heavy machinery operators, from Indigenous guardians to industry technologists, from ecologists to software developers.

Dedicating a portion of the Fund for a skills and training program to grow the watershed sector—a BC Centre for Watershed Security—would align with BC's new Economic Plan and support youth employment and a better just transition for under-employed resource workers, in sectors such as forestry.



COSTS

As climate change intensifies year on year, the costs of inaction will continue to grow.

2021 Costs



FLOODS
\$9B

projected costs of
Nov floods



FIRES
\$500M

amount spent
fighting fires



DROUGHTS
\$20M

drought package for
farmers in Sept

BENEFITS

The social and economic benefits of investing in watersheds are substantial.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The natural infrastructure of a watershed (eg. wetlands, forests and streambanks) provide the same protection as built infrastructure *at half the cost.*

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Investing in watershed security will strengthen Indigenous governance, contribute to Nation re-building, and support Indigenous economic development.

LESS CONFLICT

Funding for collaborative governance and forward planning reduces conflict, improves decision-making, and increases social cohesion.

JOB CREATION

Economists estimate the Fund could add 13,000+ new jobs over the next 10 years. 800 jobs were created in a single year (2021) through \$27 million in economic stimulus.

For every \$1 invested by the provincial government in watershed projects, another \$4 will be leveraged

This funding will catalyze investments from other sources, including federal, municipal, philanthropic and private sector contributions.



INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Meeting these four Indicators of Success will ensure a truly impactful Fund that will garner broad support across the province.



SCALED FOR IMPACT

Allocating sufficient funding is necessary to make a difference. An annual allocation of at least \$75 million is required.



SUSTAINABLE

Restoration, governance and monitoring require sustained funding over time to have impact. Long-term funding is essential for Indigenous Nation re-building in watershed stewardship.



INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE

The Fund should be co-governed with First Nations, advance Indigenous rights and principles, and ensure explicit roles for First Nations in the governance and leadership structure.



FLEXIBLE TO REGIONAL NEEDS

The Fund should be structured to respond to the priorities of different regions. These priorities could be defined by existing collaborative initiatives or new watershed based tables.

SUPPORT FOR WATERSHED SECURITY FUND

FIRST NATIONS LEADERS COUNCIL — “We applaud the Province for taking steps towards launching this long-awaited Watershed Security Fund and we look forward to working with the Province to advance the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the co-development and co-implementation of this important fund.”

FNLC Press Release, April 2022

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — “UBCM requests that the Province of BC create a dedicated, sustainable, annual funding source for the Watershed Security Fund that provides \$75 million annually for community driven watershed security initiatives.”

Union of BC Municipalities Resolution, Sept 2021

PUBLIC SUPPORT — “78% of British Columbians hold the view that BC needs to make major investments in watershed security to protect fresh water in this province.”

McAllister Opinion Research, Sept 2021



**BC
WATERSHED
SECURITY
COALITION**

We are a non-partisan, diverse coalition, of 44 organizations including farmers, hunters and anglers, Indigenous peoples, local governments, businesses, and conservationists, representing 255,000 British Columbians from all walks of life. The Coalition focuses on advancing modern-day solutions that increase community resilience and security.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Lillooet BC. Title page. Photo by Marci Janecek, Marsupial Design.

Old growth forest. Pg 2. (Top). Photo by Province of British Columbia, flickr.com

Fisheries staff collect baseline inventory throughout Haisla territory on species including salmon, eulachon, and crab. Pg. 2 (Top left). Photo by Mike Jacobs, Haisla Fisheries Commission. Courtesy Coast Funds.

Okanagan Lake, from Naramata Bench. Pg. 2 (Top right). Photo by Becks, Commons.Wikimedia.org.

BC fruit, Summerland BC. Pg. 2 (Bottom left). Photo by Adam Foster, Flickr.com.

Pair of sockeye salmon. Pg. 2 (Bottom right). Photo by iStock.com.

Drought in the North Arm of the Cowichan River. Pg. 3 (Top left). Photo by Parker Jefferson, Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable.

Firefighter fighting forest fire in BC. Pg. 3. (Top right). Photo by Province of British Columbia, flickr.com

Flooding in Abbotsford. Pg 3 (Bottom). Photo by Province of British Columbia, flickr.com

Kwadacha Nation Wetland Training. Pg. 5 (Top left). Photo credit: BCWF Wetlands Education Program

Watertech researcher. Pg. 5 (Top middle). Photo credit pexels.com

Khaylish Fraser, Aquatics Program Coordinator of Central Kootenay Invasive Species Society, Workshop in Salmo, B.C. Pg. 5 (Top right). Photo credit BCWF Wetlands Education Program

Water testing technician. Pg.5 (Middle left). Photo credit iStock.com

Indigenous Central Westcoast Forest Society: Training youth, Clayoquat. Pg. 5. (Middle right.) Photo by Lora Tryon

Field training participants. Pg 5 (Bottom left). Photo by BCWF Wetlands Education Program.

Forest Ministry staff and BCWF field training for Forest and Range Evaluation Program, Fort St James, B.C. Pg. 5. (Bottom right). Photo by BCWF Wetlands Education Program.