

February 10, 2025  
Honourable Davie Eby  
Office of the Premier  
Legislative Assembly of British Columbia  
Delivered via email: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)



**BC**  
**WATERSHED**  
**SECURITY**  
**COALITION**

Dear Premier Eby,

We are writing to you as members of the [BC Watershed Security Coalition](#), and community partners. Our Coalition is a non-partisan, diverse coalition of 50 organizations representing 255,000 British Columbians. Our Coalition has come together out of the recognition that healthy watersheds are fundamental to human health, security, economic prosperity and reconciliation.

We welcomed your pledge in the recent election, along with 96% of Cabinet members, to advocate for actions that:

- 1) enhance local watershed management and partnerships, and
- 2) increase funding for watershed security to equip local people with the jobs, tools and resources to restore their local watersheds.

We are also pleased to see the commitments to strengthen watershed-level management and community-based priority setting reflected in your government's agreement with the BC Green Party and the mandate letter of the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

### **Investing in watershed security is a critical economic strategy**

BC's energy, resource sectors, and thousands of small businesses—farmers, craft brewers, tourism operators and manufacturers—depend on healthy watersheds and a reliable water supply. BC's watershed workforce—the sector dedicated to managing, protecting and restoring these watersheds—is also a key economic driver, supporting over 47,000 jobs across the province.

Without watershed security, BC will struggle to build economic resilience and meet other core priorities. Housing targets can't be met without water for new developments, and safe drinking water, along with protection from droughts, wildfires, and floods is essential to public safety. Investing in healthy watersheds is also vital for advancing DRIPA and fostering partnerships with First Nations.

### **Public concerns over watershed security have surged**

In recent years, British Columbians have faced devastating floods, wildfires, and droughts—straining river systems, damaging homes, and costing the province billions. A [recent poll](#) by McAllister Opinion Research and ResearchCo reveals that 64% of British Columbians now fear freshwater scarcity—up from 37% in 2018—and 69% are worried they will personally experience a major water crisis in the coming years.

### **80% drop in funding puts communities & local economies At risk.**

The \$57 million invested by the province in Budgets 2021 and 2022 recognized the power of this local leadership by supporting over 110 watershed projects that improved public safety, increased food security, and rebuilt ecosystems. These projects employed more than 1,800 workers while mitigating the costly losses of worsening drought, wildfires and floods.

The BC Watershed Security Fund, established with a \$100 million endowment in Budget 2023, was a significant step forward, but it currently generates only \$3-5 million annually for watershed projects—80% less than the \$27 million allocated in Budget 2021.

As a Coalition, we are sounding the alarm that this **80%** decline in annual provincial funding for watershed security is putting communities, jobs, and ecosystems at risk by eroding vital front-line capacity.

**Job Losses:** First Nations, local governments and community organizations are losing workers. For example, over 100 people were trained under the Wetlands Workforce to restore and maintain 250 wetland sites—providing critical flood protection, water storage, and wildlife habitat—but this workforce has now been cut by more than 75%.

**Community Risks:** this loss of capacity is increasing public safety risks associated with climate disasters. For example, during the 2024 Argenta Creek wildfire, data from Living Lakes' monitoring program helped firefighters locate water sources to suppress the fire and protect homes. Scaling back this program undermines water and wildfire management in the region.

**Watershed Risks** - over the past three years, considerable momentum was built for watershed restoration and protection but this momentum is coming to an abrupt halt. For example, the Indigenous Watersheds Initiative supported 44 First Nations to map and monitor hundreds of waterways and restore 4,800 hectares of critical watersheds. Many Nations are now urgently seeking resources to find a way to continue this essential work.

### **Budget 2025 Investment: Build BC's Watershed Workforce**

The BC Watershed Security Coalition calls for a sustained annual investment of **\$75 million** in BC's Watershed Workforce.

Based on past watershed investments and economic projections, this funding would create 2,500-3,500 jobs over the next 3 years, and up to 10,000 jobs over 8-10 years. Organizations and projects hiring these workers would match the provincial investment one-to-one, effectively doubling the province's return.

This investment would provide a much-needed boost to communities in this time of economic uncertainty—especially in rural areas—while helping reduce the billions spent on water disaster recovery. It would also ensure sustainable water supplies for communities and businesses while preserving a healthy environment for all British Columbians to enjoy.

An overwhelming 86% of British Columbians support funding for training and employing workers to monitor, restore, and manage freshwater across the province.

**We urge you to fulfill your election pledge to strengthen watershed security and local management before it's too late.**

Sincerely,



Coree Tull, Chair BC Watershed Security Coalition

**In collaboration with the following individuals and organizations:**

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