



For Immediate Release

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Election Canada 2015: Elect Water Protection

On October 19, Canadians will vote for a new federal government. Keepers of the Athabasca urges all eligible voters to make every effort to vote, and to consider what really matters when voting. As respected water scientist David Schindler recently said, "We're going to forget all about the economy when we run out of water."

Everyone in Canada is affected by reduced environment department budgets and by **omnibus Bills C-45 and Bill C-38** (both enacted in 2012) which severely decrease protection of our waters:

- Changes to the **Fisheries Act** remove legal barriers to development. Previously, developers had to apply for an Approval if their project damaged lakes, rivers, or other fish habitat. Recently University of Calgary law experts concluded that changes in funding and law mean that "the federal government's abandonment of the habitat protection field has been a decade's long process, beginning with the implementation of a risk based approach to habitat roughly ten years ago"
- Contrary to the 'free prior and informed consent' required by the United Nations, which the Province of Alberta has pledged to uphold, amendments to the **Indian Act** gives the government authority to determine the surrender of any portion of any First Nation territory at any time.
- The **Navigable Waters Protection Act** (now the **Navigation Protection Act**) was changed to exclude 2.5 million Canadian rivers and lakes from protection. Only 97 lakes and 62 rivers are now protected. Mikisew Cree First Nation won the right to future consultation, but not an injunction against these devastating changes in their federal court challenge against the federal government (December 2014).

Keepers of the Athabasca supports any of Canada's political parties that institute the following water protections:

- Restore the legal protections for waters and fish habitat that were removed by funding reduction and omnibus bills, and pledge to uphold the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.
- Introduce a federal Safe Drinking Water Act in support of provinces, municipalities, and First Nations to keep drinking water safe for all Canadians.
- Establish and implement a Pan-Canadian Plan for Water, in collaboration with the provinces, territories and indigenous governments, and in consideration with the public to address water quality and quantity across jurisdictions, and which considers the impacts of climate change on current and future water resources.

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