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## *Protecting Water, Securing our Future*

### Overview:

The BC Greens are focused on proactive solutions, addressing crises before they escalate. We are committed to making a meaningful investment in watershed security and protecting BC's vital water resources. To ensure local communities can take charge of their water security, we will create and support water stewardship councils in every region. These boards will empower communities to manage and conserve their water resources collaboratively, with a focus on advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and addressing climate change-related water challenges.

### Current Conditions:

British Columbia is facing increasing climate challenges, with more frequent and severe droughts, landslides, flooding, and water quality issues. These extreme conditions are putting strain on our current water management systems, which are struggling to keep pace with the escalating threats posed by climate change. Farmers across BC are particularly affected, facing water shortages that threaten food security and their livelihoods.

Water is set to be the defining issue of the coming decades, making the need for effective local decision-making and water management more urgent than ever. Without intervention, our way of life, economy, and food security are at risk.

### What the BC Greens will do:

The BC Greens will prioritize watershed security by creating water stewardship councils in every community. These councils will:

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1. Facilitate collaborative governance, with First Nations and local stakeholders - including farmers, industry representatives, environmental groups, and commercial users - working together to manage water resources.
  2. Make informed decisions to protect and enhance watershed health, ensuring that local communities are equipped to respond to water security challenges.
  3. Advance reconciliation by involving First Nations in the governance of water resources, respecting Indigenous knowledge and rights.

Water stewardship councils will implement tailored, community-driven solutions to strengthen local governance and environmental stewardship, while addressing the unique needs of each watershed.

## How much will it cost?

The BC Greens are committing \$100 million to fund the establishment and ongoing support of water stewardship councils. This long-term investment is essential for advancing Indigenous rights, building local water management capacity, and ensuring enduring outcomes that protect BC's watersheds. This \$100 million will go to administrative costs, honoraria for board members, and providing grants to support watershed security initiatives at the decision of the board.

## Q&A:

### **Q: Why is this important?**

**A:** Water is a shared responsibility, and sustainable stewardship requires the involvement of First Nations and local communities. Collaborative water stewardship councils will ensure that decisions are made locally, with input from those who rely on and protect these water sources.

### **Q: How will you implement water stewardship councils?**

A: We will establish water stewardship councils in every community, empowering them with the authority to make decisions on watershed security. These boards will bring together First Nations, farmers, industry representatives, and environmental stewards to manage and conserve water resources collaboratively.

**Q: What is the purpose of water stewardship councils?**

A: Water stewardship councils are designed to address the specific needs and strengths of each watershed. They will make informed decisions that promote local water security, advance reconciliation, and implement sustainable, community-driven solutions. This will enhance environmental stewardship and empower local governance.

**Q: Are there examples of successful water stewardship councils?**

A: Yes! The Cowichan Watershed Board is an excellent example of collaborative governance. It is a partnership between the Cowichan Tribes First Nation and the Cowichan Valley Regional District, working together to protect and enhance the Cowichan Watershed's health.

**Q: What will this look like on a provincial level?**

A: British Columbia's natural geography is divided into nine major watershed basins, including the Fraser, Columbia, and Skeena. These basins, or smaller sub-watersheds within them, could serve as the basis for organizing water stewardship councils across the province.

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