

Engaging  
Manitobans on  
**WATER  
MANAGEMENT**

July 2021

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The Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development is leading the development of a provincial **Water Management Strategy**. The last provincial water management strategy for Manitoba was completed in 2003. Much has changed over the last 20 years and a new water strategy will ensure effective and sustainable management of our water resources now and into the future.

## Strategy Framework

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development, with input from our partner departments, has developed a preliminary framework for the water strategy, including a proposed **vision**, **guiding principles** and **key focus areas**. The framework is informed by the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Council and provides broad direction for the water strategy.

## Vision Statement

Manitoba needs to create its own strong, clear, made-in-Manitoba vision that defines a level of ambition and sets the Provincial Water Management Strategy on a successful course. An effective vision statement will succinctly communicate how water is valued and managed for the quality of life it sustains, the wide array of sustainable ecosystem services it provides, and the economic sustainability and growth it supports.

The proposed vision for Manitoba's Water Management Strategy is:

*Resilient, healthy waters that support thriving ecosystems, communities and economies for generations.*

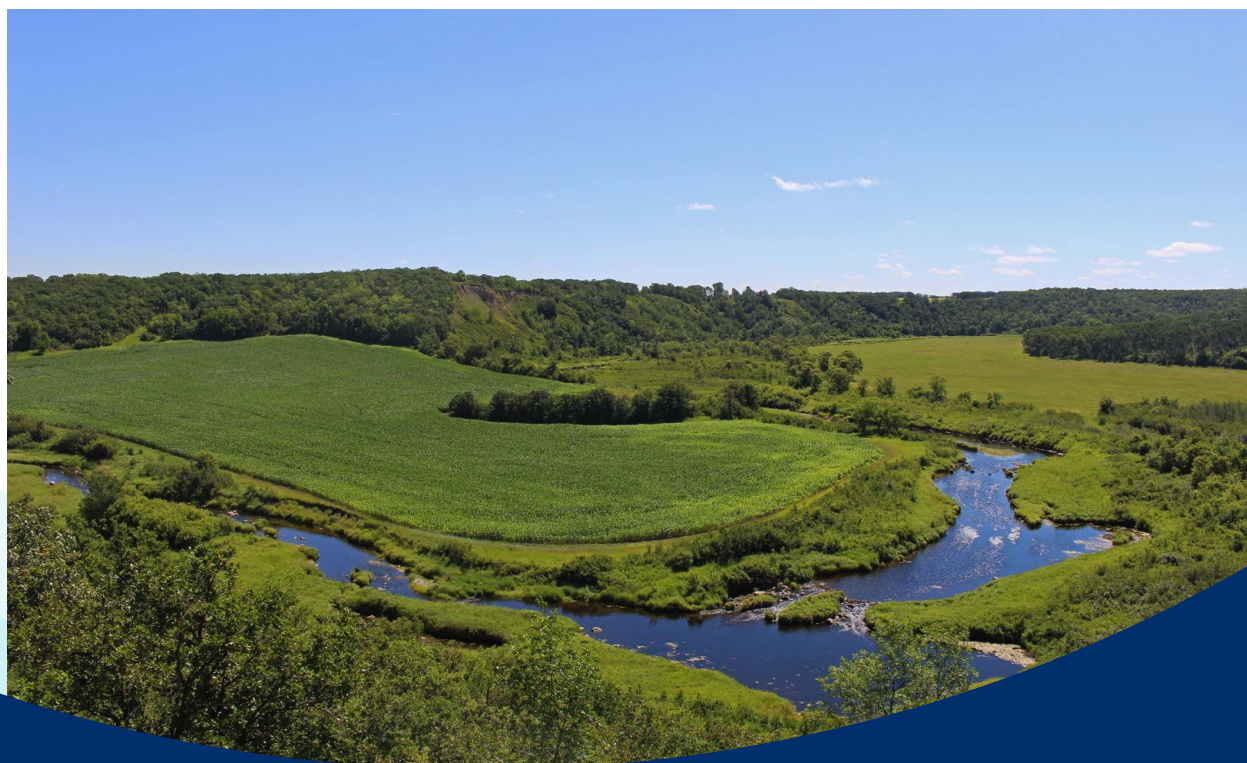
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## Guiding Principles

Guiding principles will represent the foundation for water management in Manitoba. They will provide a set of core values for future decision-making as we identify priorities and work toward our common vision.

Manitoba's Expert Advisory Council proposed the following guiding principles for the provincial Water Management Strategy:

- **Protect the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater.** Surface and groundwater quality and quantity require ongoing protection for the benefit of all people and the environment, now and in the future.
- **Support economic development and address water-based limits to growth.** Water and water-related infrastructure is critical to economic development. Water must be sustainably allocated to support current and future growth and development while preserving the natural environment.
- **Utilize watershed and basin boundaries.** Manitoba has managed water on the basis of ecological boundaries, such as watersheds and basins. Water management at this scale crosses local, provincial and national jurisdictional boundaries and facilitates a coordinated approach to planning.
- **Link land and water planning.** Land and water are interconnected, and changes in one part of the ecosystem often affects another one. Therefore, water planning should also include land-use considerations and vice-versa. These links should be reflected in all government planning processes.



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- **Plan for the long-term with short-term milestones.** Sustainable water management requires a long-term planning approach that takes climate change into account. However, short-term milestones are also needed to ensure timely action and accountability.
- **Ensure Indigenous participation and respect for traditional knowledge.** Indigenous community involvement is key to the development of any water management approach. The unique Indigenous relationship with water and land, and the use of traditional knowledge, are important aspects to understand, consider and respect.
- **Encourage the involvement of all Manitobans.** All Manitobans have a stake in and responsibilities related to water management. Government, industry, communities and other stakeholders have important contributions in the future of water management and planning.
- **Define roles and responsibilities.** Responsibility, authority and accountability for water management and the implementation of the Water Strategy must be defined and grounded in policy and legislation.
- **Ensure a basis in science and evidence.** Effective water management requires a foundation in science and actions need to be based on good evidence. This requires a firm understanding of the long-term and cumulative risks of action and inaction and the use of the best available practices and tools.





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## Key Focus Areas

Focus areas are the overarching goals that the provincial Water Management Strategy will focus on achieving. Once focus areas are set, further engagement with stakeholders, including Indigenous groups and organizations, will inform the detailed outcomes and actions to be included within each focus area.

Manitoba is proposing eleven focus areas that may be included in the provincial Water Management Strategy:

- **Enhance water supply for sustainable development.** A reliable supply of good quality water is essential for economic growth. In Manitoba, billions of dollars are generated each year as a direct result of our vast supplies of water, including through agriculture, hydroelectricity, fishing, tourism and industrial use. Although the supply of surface water and groundwater in Manitoba is generally adequate and of excellent quality, water may not be available where or when or in the quantity or quality it is needed to support basic human needs, the natural environment and economic development. Actions under this focus area are expected to enhance our understanding of water supply and demand, and examine options to increase the reliability of water supplies.
- **Make every drop count through efficient water use.** Water is precious, and ultimately, supplies are limited. Work under this focus area is expected to further our understanding of how we can use water efficiently, including supporting research and adoption of practices that improve water use efficiency.
- **Support coordinated water management and governance across watersheds and basins.** Water does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries and therefore water management and governance must be coordinated across boundaries. Actions under this focus area could include enhanced watershed management planning, improving links between land use and watershed planning, and strengthening collaboration with upstream jurisdictions.



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- **Advance Indigenous inclusion in water management.** Manitoba is committed to enhancing the role of Indigenous peoples in water management including through recent changes to The Watershed Districts Act. It is essential that actions under this focus area are developed in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.
- **Increase our understanding of groundwater supply and quality and its inter-relationship with other parts of the environment.** Manitoba is fortunate to have an abundance of high-quality, high-yielding aquifers that can be used as a reliable source of water. However, groundwater quality issues exist in some areas of the province and some aquifers may be at risk from overexploitation. Action items under this focus area could include identifying areas where groundwater is available and can be developed to enhance economic growth and well being, and making information on groundwater more readily accessible.
- **Build our resilience to a variable and changing climate.** Climate change poses real and potentially significant risks to Manitoba's environment, economy and the social fabric of our communities. Manitoba is expected to experience warmer temperatures, changes in precipitation and a greater frequency of extreme events, including droughts and floods. Actions under this focus area could identify opportunities and build our resilience to a variable and changing climate.
- **Address our water infrastructure challenges and opportunities.** Maintaining aging built water infrastructure is an issue that infrastructure managers are facing more frequently, not just in Manitoba but across Canada. Climate change is expected to put additional strain on these aging infrastructure systems, further reducing their effectiveness. Actions under this focus area could include inventorying infrastructure assets to improve our understanding of the deficit, exploring new funding models, assessing infrastructure needs and planning for the future. They could also include researching and encouraging natural infrastructure solutions to support climate change adaptation, environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity.





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- **Improve surface water quality.** Surface water quality in Manitoba's rivers and lakes varies across the province but is generally suitable for a wide range of uses, including as a source for drinking, recreation, irrigation, and industry and to support fish and other aquatic life. However, water quality issues such as excess algae occur in some lakes and new and emerging contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals and microplastics, are being detected in surface waters. Actions under this focus area could include enhancing wastewater treatment, including from the city of Winnipeg, and increasing the adoption of beneficial management practices to reduce nutrient runoff.
- **Protect biodiversity and support aquatic ecosystem health.** Manitoba's rivers and lakes support aquatic ecosystems, including diverse communities of wildlife, fish and plants. Many Manitoba streams are robust and resilient to altered flows, thereby maintaining biodiversity. However, that resiliency is not unlimited and overtaxing resiliency could lead to a substantial loss of biodiversity—something Manitoba has agreed to protect as a signatory to the Convention on Biodiversity. Actions under this focus area could consider strategies to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species and assessments of instream flow needs.
- **Improve the information and knowledge available for effective water management decision making.** Manitoba and other partners and agencies collect a significant amount of data on water, including data related to water quality and quantity. Yet information and knowledge may not be readily available for decision making and communicating with the public. Actions under this focus area could include completing a wetland inventory for Manitoba, developing and communicating performance measures related to water, and working collaboratively with Indigenous communities to share information on water.
- **Enhance engagement and participation of Manitobans in water management.** The Manitoba government manages water for the benefit of all Manitobans and we want to engage you in this work. Actions under this focus area could include supporting cottage associations and lake stewardship groups in the development and implementation of programs to understand and protect lake water quality and aquatic habitats. They could also include facilitating the collection of citizen science.



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### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Please let us know what you think about the proposed **vision**, **guiding principles** and **focus areas** by taking the survey on **EngageMB.ca**. You can also find more information, including background documents, news & updates, and engagement timelines on the water strategy engagement portal.

We thank you for your contribution to this important initiative. Your feedback will be considered as we develop Manitoba's Provincial Water Management Strategy.

