

To help restore this resource, we can:

- help clean up lakeshores and riverbanks so as to return the use of waterways to the population;
- reduce the use of pesticides that harm the environment by replacing them with natural products;

To help manage water resources more effectively, we can:

- raise awareness among our friends and family regarding the importance and sustainable use of water;
- help set up a network for public access to Québec lakes by getting involved in organizations that share this goal;
- help develop water-based recreational activities;
- get involved in organizations that manage watersheds that affect us, or organizations working on problems linked to the St. Lawrence River;
- share our information and expertise on the lakes and rivers with which we are familiar with organizations established for their protection, restoration and development.

Since there is no substitute for water, protecting, restoring, developing and managing this resource represent challenges that we must meet collectively in order to help present and future generations.

As a depository of a resource with incalculable value, Québec must act decisively to conserve water, for water is the source of all life and portends the future.

For additional information, please contact the Ministère de l'Environnement's information centre, or the regional office in your area.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:
MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT'S
INFORMATION CENTRE**

Accueil et renseignements
Édifice Marie-Guyart, rez-de-chaussée
675, boulevard René-Lévesque Est
Québec (Québec) G1R 5V7
Telephone: (418) 521-3830 or 1 800 561-1616
Fax: (418) 646-5974
E-Mail: info@menv.gouv.qc.ca

**REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE
MINISTÈRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT**

01 BAS-SAINT-LAURENT

212, avenue Belzile
Rimouski (Québec) G5L 3C3
Telephone: (418) 727-3511
Fax: (418) 727-3849

02 SAGUENAY-LAC-SAINT-JEAN

3950, boulevard Harvey, 4^e étage
Jonquière (Québec) G7X 8L6
Telephone: (418) 695-7883
Fax: (418) 695-7897

03 CAPITALE-NATIONALE

365, 55^e Rue Ouest
Charlesbourg (Québec) G1H 7M7
Telephone: (418) 644-8844
Fax: (418) 646-1214

04 MAURICIE

100, rue Lavolette, 1^{er} étage
Trois-Rivières (Québec) G9A 5S9
Telephone: (819) 371-6581
Fax: (819) 371-6987

05 ESTRIE

770, rue Goretti
Sherbrooke (Québec) J1E 3H4
Telephone: (819) 820-3882
Fax: (819) 820-3958

06 MONTRÉAL

5199, rue Sherbrooke Est, bureau 3860
Montréal (Québec) H1T 3X9
Telephone: (514) 873-3636
Fax: (514) 873-5662

07 OUTAOUAIS

98, rue Lois
Hull (Québec) J8Y 3R7
Telephone: (819) 772-3434
Fax: (819) 772-3952

08 ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE

180, boulevard Rideau, 1^{er} étage
Rouyn-Noranda (Québec) J9X 1N9
Telephone: (819) 763-3333
Fax: (819) 763-3202

09 CÔTE-NORD

818, boulevard Laure, rez-de-chaussée
Sept-Îles (Québec) G4R 1Y8
Telephone: (418) 964-8888
Fax: (418) 964-8023

10 NORD-DU-QUÉBEC

180, boul. Rideau, 1^{er} étage
Rouyn-Noranda (Québec) J9X 1N9
Telephone: (819) 763-3333
Fax: (819) 763-3202

11 GASPÉSIE-ÎLES-DE-LA-MADELEINE

124, 1^{re} Avenue Ouest
Sainte-Anne-des-Monts (Québec) G4V 1C5
Telephone: (418) 763-3301
Fax: (418) 763-7810

12 CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES

675, route Cameron, bureau 200
Sainte-Marie (Québec) G6E 3V7
Telephone: (418) 386-8000
Fax: (418) 386-8080

13 LAVAL

850, boulevard Vanier
Laval (Québec) H7C 2M7
Telephone: (450) 661-2008
Fax: (450) 661-2217

14 LANAUDIÈRE

100, boulevard Industriel
Repentigny (Québec) J6A 4X6
Telephone: (450) 654-4355
Fax: (450) 654-6131

15 LAURENTIDES

140, rue Saint-Eustache, 3^e étage
Saint-Eustache (Québec) J7R 2K9
Telephone: (450) 623-7811
Fax: (450) 623-7042

16 MONTÉRÉGIE

201, Place Charles-LeMoine, 2^e étage
Longueuil (Québec) J4K 2T5
Telephone: (450) 928-7607
Fax: (450) 928-7755

17 CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC

1579, boulevard Louis-Fréchette
Nicolet (Québec) J3T 2A5
Telephone: (819) 293-4122
Fax: (819) 293-8322

Facing a new
challenge together

WATER. OUR LIFE. OUR FUTURE.
QUÉBEC WATER POLICY

A NEW VISION OF WATER GOVERNANCE



Through the Québec Water Policy, the government is making a commitment to the people of Québec to manage water responsibly and equitably, while guaranteeing the sustainability of water for current and future generations.

This is the government's first water policy. It is reaffirming that water constitutes an integral part of Québec's wealth and collective heritage. Therefore, it is making a commitment to more effectively manage, protect, restore and develop a resource that is essential for human survival, and for the survival of our aquatic ecosystems.

In formulating the policy, the government gave prime consideration to the health of the Québec population among other commitments. These commitments include making water accessible to all citizens, both for their basic needs and for the purposes of recreation and tourism.

The Québec Water Policy provides an innovative approach to management, since it involves the joint development and harmonization of various uses and practices with a view to sustainable development. The first application of this new form of governance is in the area of watershed management. In this regard, I am extending a special invitation to users to work together with the watershed management agencies or agencies responsible for the integrated management of the St. Lawrence.

Successful implementation of the Policy depends on the input from a variety of participants, each of whom has different responsibilities. As Minister of State for the Environment and Water, and as coordinator of government involvement in this area, I will ensure interdepartmental collaboration.

Implementation of the Québec Water Policy, which is the result of a public consensus in answer to legitimate expectations of the population, is the challenge we must now face collectively. We are all being called upon to do our share.

André Boisclair

THE BLUE PLANET

There is an abundance of water on our planet. It covers 70% of the surface of our planet. However, only 2.5% of this water is freshwater. Since Québec has 3% of the world's renewable freshwater reserves, it is in an enviable position. It has more than a half a million lakes and thousands of rivers, including the majestic St. Lawrence River, which provides drinking water to millions of Quebecers.

WATER: THE SOURCE OF LIFE

We use water for our personal needs: drinking, cooking, cleaning our clothes, and other forms of personal hygiene. Water also plays a role in recreation: swimming, sport fishing, canoeing and kayaking; we love to walk on a beach. Water quenches our thirst and provides comfort. It is present in every facet of our daily life. However, to ensure its availability and quality, it must be managed soundly.

The way we use water has major social and economic consequences for Québec. Its uses in agriculture include fish farming, irrigation in market gardening and livestock watering. In industry, we use it to transform raw materials, keep machinery cool and produce energy. In commerce, companies are increasingly bottling water in order to sell it. For domestic use, the development of water supply systems has led to an increase in water consumption by making it available in every home.

Did you know that, on average, every human being in the United Kingdom uses 200 litres of water every day, whereas in France they use only 150 litres? For the planet as a whole, that figure is only 137 litres. In Québec, however, the average daily consumption per person is 400 litres⁽¹⁾. We need to think about this seriously...

⁽¹⁾ Ministère de l'Environnement, La gestion de l'eau au Québec, Document de consultation (working document), 1999, p.33, and SCIENCE&VIE, September 2002, p.136.

WATER: A COVETED RESOURCE

The abundance and quality of the water found in Québec are of incalculable value. Since water forms an integral part of our landscape, we have always taken it for granted and viewed it as an inexhaustible resource, that is free and readily available. We have undervalued water because we thought that it would always be available and abundant.

As water is associated with practically every human activity, it is subject to pollution of every kind. We are constantly putting pressure on this resource. For example, by draining wetlands and swamps, we are threatening the survival of several species. We have also altered the flow of certain rivers, thereby producing changes in aquatic ecosystems. As a result, these ecosystems can no longer efficiently act as natural filters nor can they contribute to the food chain.

For over 20 years now, we have been steadfast in our determination to deal with the issue of wastewater treatment, and have made remarkable progress. However, when it comes to protecting human health, there are still a number of problems to be solved. Today, we realize that our over utilization of this resource is generating an ever greater demand for water treatment and purification. As a result, the capacity of our system to purify all this water is impeded.

Thus, we must respond in a way to conserve drinking water for current and future generations. This is why the government views water management as an issue of great importance to all Quebecers.

THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO BETTER MANAGE, PROTECT, RESTORE AND DEVELOP WATER

The implementation of the Québec Water Policy is based on over 50 commitments made by the government. Six of these commitments are of interest to the entire population of Québec. The Government of Québec is committed to:

- recognizing water as part of Québec's common heritage;
- focusing on public health protection;
- protecting, preserving and restoring aquatic ecosystems recognized as natural filters and as flora and fauna habitats;

The health of humans is intimately linked to the quality of the water they consume. In this regard, municipalities have the primary responsibility of offering high quality water to their citizens. It is for this reason that the government will:

- financially support bringing all municipal infrastructures involved in the supply of drinking water up to standard;
- promote the rehabilitation of waterworks and sewer systems;
- urge municipalities to disinfect municipal wastewater where needed;
- assist municipalities in ensuring compliance of wastewater treatment systems for isolated dwellings;
- establish practices designed to protect sources of water collection.

- providing the population of Québec with access to water that meets basic needs and facilitates leisure activities such as fishing, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, hiking, nautical tourism and nature study;
- fostering citizen participation by setting up watershed management agencies. These agencies will protect and restore ecosystems with a view to improving the environment;
- supporting volunteer organizations in our lake districts that are doing their best to prevent the degradation of aquatic, riparian and wetland environments.

Other government commitments found in the Québec Water Policy aim to improve the quality of the living environment. Thus, the government commits itself in particular to:

- continuing its undertaking in the area of agricultural drainage especially by:
 - reducing agricultural pollutants, including phosphorus, found in watercourses;
 - establishing wooded riparian buffer strips in agricultural zones to protect watercourses;
 - reducing pressure on the environment from the use of pesticides in agricultural areas;
- extending the program to reduce industrial pollution to the following sectors: the organic and inorganic chemicals industries, the surface treatment and secondary iron industries, agro-industries, as well as the textile and wood processing industries;
- urging that forest management practices be revised so as to reduce impacts on aquatic, riparian and wetland environments.

ACTIONS AVAILABLE TO ALL CITIZENS

As citizens, there are concrete actions that we too can take to promote the sustainability of water. Every action counts.

To protect this resource more effectively, we can:

- conserve water in a variety of ways, especially by using only enough water to meet your needs, and by installing appliances with low water consumption;
- respect aquatic environments, wetland environments, marshes and swamps in their natural state;
- help eliminate pollutants such as paints, oils and medications by sending them to appropriate locations;
- help establish water protection measures by getting involved in agencies responsible for managing the water in your watershed or in the St. Lawrence River watershed, or joining an environmental group;
- have the water in our well analyzed at least once a year.