

### Water safety, on tap

- 1 I've been following your ongoing Headwaters series with great interest. When my grandmother's family emigrated to North Battleford from London before the First World War, they lost two children to typhoid due to dirty water. So I had a personal interest in water safety when I was hired by the Inland Waters Directorate to complete and execute an automated planning and management system of B.C.'s freshwater network<sup>1)</sup> in 1984.
- 2 In 1991, our regional office was reorganized to include water quality on a Canada-wide basis, but the work was shut down in 1995 before it could be finished. The remnants of the federal freshwater and meteorology staff in B.C. were relocated, most to B.C.'s universities during the cost-cutting and layoff of 45,000 federal employees. For the past 20 years, the remnants of our staff have relied on university students to do the former federal work while they earned their degrees.
- 3 In 1995, I left after I was ordered to run scenarios of up to 90% cuts of our water safety monitoring network. I foresaw a Walkerton event happening in Canada and didn't want to be there when it did because our mandate was to protect the public. In 2000, Walkerton's deadly tainted-water nightmare struck.
- 4 Teaching Canadian students environmental science for the past 20 years has been an effort in vain unless the Inland Waters Directorate is reinstated to lead Canada's fragmented water safety efforts. With many of the directorate's former leaders soon to retire, a new generation is needed to protect freshwater safety.

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adapted from an article from *theglobeandmail.com*, 2015

noot 1 B.C.'s freshwater network = The freshwater network of British Columbia, a province of Canada