

Green Party Plan for TSW

By Susanne Lauten, Candidate, Green Party of Canada

The ongoing game of “musical chairs” in Canada’s Department of the Environment all but ensures that no progress is being made at Parks Canada. This is bad news for the TSW.

Two months ago, I visited the House of Commons and saw MP Peter Kent—the latest Environment Minister—stand up and tell Canadians that the Alberta oilsands are “clean energy.” How can a minister with such a shaky grasp of reality be trusted to act responsibly regarding the water issues the CEWF addresses so thoroughly? I’m more convinced than ever that we need an Independent Water Management Agency.

I’m also not happy that the recent \$500,000 research project was awarded to an American company. I would prefer a “made in Canada” solution.

As your elected Green Party MP, I would consistently pressure Parks Canada to allocate the \$300 million the TSW needs to repair and automate the dams throughout the system. This could be divided over ten years at a cost of \$30 million annually. I’m tough and tenacious, and I get results. I’m proud to say, for example, that I’m one of the people credited with getting the ancient Ontario Mining Act changed to protect those property-owners who do not own their mineral rights.

And I don’t accept the standard excuse that the money for TSW improvements is not available. It’s just a matter of priorities. The Harper government’s priorities are for wars on foreign soil, 60 exorbitantly priced fighter jets, and new mega-prisons. As well, this government doles out \$2 billion annually to subsidize the oil and gas corporations. These are the most profitable companies in world, and most are foreign-owned.

It’s clear that essential maintenance at Parks Canada facilities is at the bottom of the list. If it doesn’t clang, boom or bang, it will be ignored. Pity our silent lakes. Our fish. Our loons.

Yet the CEWF continues its valuable and unpaid work undaunted. I especially agree with its call for a comprehensive “water budget”. I’m very concerned that outflows are exceeding inputs to our water system. The past two, dry, winters have seen the annual snow-pack amount reduced by half. This could soon leave us all “overdrawn.”

New housing developments in what was traditionally “cottage country” are putting an increased strain on our water supply. As your Green MP, I would strongly encourage municipalities to require developers to install the best “state of the art” water conservation equipment. For example, modern, easy to use systems allow grey water

from the shower to be used to flush toilets. As well, new rain water catchment systems can collect and supply much of a homeowner's water needs.

The Green Party makes long-term planning and sustainability of our water systems a top priority. Water is the key to life—the key to the enjoyment of our area, and our economy. We know how to preserve it, we just need the willpower to do so.