Pre-Budget Submission 2026

Canadian Water Quality Association

September 8, 2026

The Canadian Water Quality Association recommends:

Recommendation 1: That the federal government launch a Canadian Water Quality Map that would:

a) Commit to standardize water quality data across regions
b) Provide $430 000 to establish the preliminary Canadian Water Quality Map and commit $75 000 per year, ongoing, to maintain the map, in partnership with the Canadian Water Quality Association.

Recommendation 2: That the government stablish a professional certification for Canadian water quality technicians

Recommendation 3: That the government introduces a tax credit for upgrades to high-efficiency water treatment systems.

About the Canadian Water Quality Association

The Canadian Water Quality Association (CWQA) was founded in 1956, when water dealers came together to represent the industry's collective needs. Since then, the group has advocated for increased public education on water quality in Canada, helping the government to understand our industry and deliver clean drinking water to all Canadians. The CWQA directly represents more than 230 small and medium-sized businesses across the country and serves as Canada's leading voice in the residential, commercial, and industrial water treatment industry.

Water quality is vital to Canada's economy, generating $3 billion in annual economic activity and providing over $720 million in federal and provincial revenues each year. Our industry supports over 10,000 jobs, pays more than $500 million in wages in Canada, and constitutes a sector where Canada is recognized as a global leader and a critical innovator. We train and certify over 1000 companies in Canada in advanced water quality delivery. Our goal is to be a resource for the public and government on water treatment and our industry.

Introduction

One of our nation's points of pride is our access to clean, safe drinking water. We use this water in every aspect of our lives, from personal bathing and cooking to supporting industries such as agriculture and innovation. However, over time, that water has become more vulnerable to contaminants from those vital industries, threatening freshwater systems and watersheds.

CWQA is calling on the government to adopt the **Canadian Water Quality Action Plan (CWQAP).** The Canadian Water Quality Action Plan spans three pillars that reflect our recommendations for Budget 2026, monitoring, education, and innovation. Monitoring encompasses adopting a Canadian Water Quality Map to collect and share water quality data in an easy, accessible central repository. Education would ensure that water quality professionals are properly trained and certified. Innovation means ensuring Canadians have access to new water technologies in a cost-effective way. These pillars provide the most efficient, safe, and cost-effective way to ensure that all Canadians will have access to safe drinking water, expertise, and new water technologies.

As the government supports the Canada Water Agency in launching Canada’s first National Water Security Strategy, we believe that focusing on the pillars of the Canadian Water Quality Action Plan should be a critical element of Budget 2026.

Recommendation 1: Launch a Canadian Water Quality Map.

When it comes to water quality, Canadian citizens deserve access to reliable information. Currently, information on water contaminants is inconsistently collected and reported by multiple actors such as local municipalities, private companies, and individual well testing. While water quality levels are vital for consumer information, they are also often difficult to access – or, in many rural and remote areas, do not exist at all.

Canada's most comprehensive Water Quality Map is the National Long-term Water Quality Monitoring Data. Still, it is confusing to navigate and not up to date with the information consumers, researchers, and businesses need. While it shows the government's willingness to monitor water quality, significant improvements are needed to make this resource more accessible and clearer.

The Water Quality Research Foundation in the United States maintains its own Contaminant Occurrence Map, which offers robust, consistent, and easily accessible data on 57 different contaminants to gauge their occurrence, provided by 46 state regulatory agencies. That map provides greater information about the resources in each participating state than Canada's equivalents provide nationwide.

The data and infrastructure exist in Canada, held by CWQA members, municipalities, and independent labs. Our membership has access to testing labs and facilities, as well as relationships with regional water authorities, Indigenous communities, and researchers. This information could be consolidated into a single, comprehensive resource to empower Canadians to make informed choices about their water.

By partnering with the CWQA, the federal government could provide this key resource in a central repository of information to all Canadians at a relatively low cost, leveraging existing relationships with the Water Quality Association in the United States and our members' institutional knowledge.

Commit to standardizing water quality data across regions:

Consistent guidelines and standards for water collection data will simplify the government's process for the monitoring contaminants in Canadian water sources. This creates opportunities to strengthen public education and programming on water quality in Canada, ensuring consumers know they are making the best choice for their homes and families when it comes to in-home water treatment.

Water quality data collection across Canada is currently disparate and disconnected. Our members provide services across a range of provinces and municipalities, and data collection methods often vary across jurisdictions. Standardized data collection, storage, and reporting across regions would allow our members to transition seamlessly across jurisdictions, benefiting water treatment professionals and Canadians seeking professional water technician services. This data would feed into the Canadian Water Quality Map we are looking to build.

Provide $430 000 to establish the preliminary Canadian Water Quality Map and commit $75 000 per year, ongoing, to maintain the map, in partnership with the Canadian Water Quality Association.

Additional funding is needed to build a repository of existing water quality data and identify gaps that must be filled. We must first invest in accurately defining the project's scope to streamline the establishment of the Water Quality Map and reduce future operational expenses.

Committing to standardized water quality data gives the federal government the opportunity to define its priorities for resource quality map creation, promotion, and access. We hope to build a supportive partnership by providing additional data collected by our members to inform Canada's current water landscape, while supporting existing networks and the independent data they collect.

Existing data will form the foundation of the Canadian Water Quality Map, so we will need to hire professionals with GIS software and coding expertise to geographically pinpoint test and extraction sites. We expect securing that expertise to significantly contribute to the total cost of $430 000 in the first year of development of the Canadian Water Quality Map.

Following the establishment of the map and its release to the public, the costs to maintain the map will be approximately $75 000 per year, including the costs associated with hiring a staff person or contractor who receives, interprets and cleans the data, updates the map, and provides maintenance of the tool’s code once established. We hope that the federal government can grant half of these funds to CWQA to support the tool, or this could be substituted with potential cost-recovery models.

Recommendation 2: Establish a professional certification for Canadian water quality technicians.

The CWQA believes that establishing a professional certification for water quality and treatment professionals would demonstrate a unified Canadian standard of professional practice.

Presently, the conversation around water treatment standards stems from an American-rooted regulatory approach to third-party certification. In 2025, the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) considered adopting ASSE 22000, an American standard for water treatment installer qualifications. That standard did not align with Canadian best practices or the internationally recognized ISO 17024, which permits a single entity to provide both training and certification, provided it maintains impartiality.

CWQA has been involved in the multi-year development of ASSE 22000, advocating for Canadian needs throughout the process – with limited success. Accepting a U.S.-centric approach risks excluding qualified Canadian providers, increasing compliance burdens, and creating barriers to workforce mobility at a time when Canada is making a concerted effort to reduce economic barriers.

CWQA recommends that the federal government adopt the licensing and credentialing for water treatment professionals, which we have already developed. Health Canada is considering endorsing the CWQA program. Additionally, the CWQA has been engaging with Provincial and Territorial Apprenticeship and Certification Authorities to highlight the need for a micro-credential, full red seal trade, or a recognized certification. This certification would be required by any company or person involved in supplying water treatment to consumers, businesses, and industries.

The federal government should also establish a Canadian-led industry working group composed of regulators and training providers to develop a harmonized, evidence-based national standard tailored to Canada's workforce and regulatory landscape, with consultation by CWQA members. The CWQA believes that a professional certification for Canadian water treatment professionals should be created in partnership with the Canadian industry.

Recommendation 3: As part of Adopting the Canadian Water Quality Action Plan (CWQAP), introduce a tax credit for upgrades to high-efficiency water treatment systems.

As Canadians consider their water use more carefully, demand is growing for newer, more effective water technologies. High-efficiency water pumps are a part of that new technology. High-efficiency water pumps ensure that, when water is used in a home, as little as possible is used. This is one way individuals can lower water usage, as Canadians become more environmentally conscious. As the government continues to focus on its home-building agenda, demand for water technologies such as heat pumps will only grow.

Water technologies, while increasingly necessary to improve water-use efficiency or address contamination, are also expensive. The federal government should support Canadians' efforts to be proactive by providing a tax credit for water technologies, including updated equipment, whether at the point of entry or the point of use. Investing in water quality infrastructure is key to avoiding long-term water quality issues, and by helping Canadians mitigate those issues up front, the government and Canadians will maximize long-term savings. Our members are experts in water quality and safety, and it benefits all of us to have their technology in Canadians' homes.

For more information, please contact:

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