

May 18, 2006 (amended May 22, 2006)

For: Barbara Darling, President, National Capital Branch, CIIA

From: Blair Seaborn, Geoffrey Bruce, Dwight Fulford

Subject: Water Conference organized by the Policy Research Initiative, May 8-10, 2006

Three members of the study group on water resources attended last week's 3-day conference on "Freshwater for the Future: Policies for Sustainable Water Management in Canada" hosted by Policy Research Initiative (PRI). It is attached to the Privy Council Office – or was until a couple of days ago! PRI had a number of partners from government departments and agencies and the private sector. The conference was well organized and run, bringing together as presenters many of the most informed and thoughtful Canadians on the subject of water from federal and provincial governments, academia, First Nations, NGOs and the private sector. Plenary and panel sessions addressed such questions as boundary waters; watershed management; valuing and allocating water resources; clean water for municipalities, rural areas and First Nations; technological innovation, and the role of science. The overall theme was integrated water governance in Canada.

I am attaching a copy of the "Conference at a Glance", summarizing the three very full days of plenary and panel sessions, almost all of which the three of us were able to cover. I am also attaching a one-page listing of the PRI Sustainable Development Publications to give you an idea of the scope of their activities.

I shall not attempt a summary of the conference itself, as that will in due course become available on the PRI web site, [www.policyresearch.gc.ca](http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca). I have available, but have not yet perused, a copy of their publication "Horizons", May, 2006 on "Freshwater for the Future" as well as a CD containing synthesis reports, briefing notes, working papers and journal articles related to Water Demand Management, Pollution, International Governance Issues and Integrated Management.

We have a few comments to offer on the conference as it relates to our study on Canada-USA transboundary water resources. Several of the sessions were devoted to different aspects of boundary waters, but of course the conference had a much broader scope than that.

First, it was reassuring to us that the conference drew attention to all the key issues which we addressed in our report and our report did not have any glaring omissions. From the tenor of the discussions, we would expect that the conclusions and recommendations coming out of the conference are likely to be remarkably similar to our own, though perhaps a little less blunt. There was throughout the conference much discussion of the absence of leadership and the need for better governance structures related to water. We heard a lot about the serious erosion of financial and human resources, at both the federal and provincial levels, related to scientific and economic research on water, as well as to