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[Canadian Water: Towards a New Strategy](#)

Environment Minister to give keynote speech at MISC conference tackling water issues

By Pascal Zamprelli

When it comes to natural resources, Canada is by all accounts a lucky country. But there is a risk that perceived abundance breeds complacency, particularly with respect to the one resource that most of us take for granted and believe will always be accessible and plentiful: water.

The challenges surrounding the use, management, and conservation of water are likely to move to the forefront of the environmental debate over the coming decades, both here and abroad. How should we think about water? Is it a precious public good or a marketable commodity? Is there an impending water crisis in Canada? In the world? And if so, what do we do about it?

Experts on the issue from around the world, including academics, politicians, representatives of civil society, and government officials will convene in an attempt to answer some of these questions at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada's (MISC's) 2010 conference, Canadian Water: Towards a New Strategy, which will take place on March 25 and 26 at the Faculty Club.

For Antonia Maioni, Director of the MISC and co-chair of the conference, the time is ripe for a broad debate on how the world will manage its water. "In the wake of the Copenhagen climate talks, the world is coming to grips with the realization that environmental sustainability will require a co-ordinated international approach, and how we deal with water will be central to that strategy," she said. "We must look seriously at how we can use, manage, and share our water in sustainable ways."

Canada's role in this global challenge is certain to be the subject of intense discussion, particularly when Canada's Environment Minister Jim Prentice addresses the conference on the Friday afternoon.

"As one of the countries with the most natural resources on the planet, we are in a position to take the lead on a crucial aspect of environmental and trade policy," Maioni said. "Are Canadians up to the task? This conference will go a long way toward answering that question."

Indeed, confirmed speakers represent a Who's Who of water-policy experts, including Newfoundland Minister of Environment Charlene Johnson; Zafar Adeel, Director of the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health; Professor David W. Schindler of the University of Alberta; Margaret

of the Global Agenda Council of the World Economic Forum and the International Water Management Institute; and Canadian pollster Nik Nanos.

Since 1995, the MISC has hosted large-scale annual conferences that foster informed, non-partisan discussions of issues affecting Canadians, ranging from Quebec-Canada relations, Aboriginal issues, citizenship and health care to Canadian media, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, food, and cultural policy. Without fail, these conferences advance necessary debate on some of the most important policy issues of our time, and as such bring us closer to solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

Without water, there is no life. It can hardly get more important than that.

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