

Letter from our CEO Nicola Crawhall



I am delighted to provide you with highlights of an exciting year here at Canadian Water Network (CWN), and a peek into the direction we are headed in 2023.

As the second largest country in the world, a country with plentiful freshwater resources compared to most other countries, notwithstanding water shortage issues in some regions, Canada is quite simply a global water colossus. With that status comes enormous responsibility to ensure that we are good stewards of the water that is in our care.

It is important to recognize and acknowledge the relationship that the First Nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada have with the waters on which all Canadians depend. As expressed by the Assembly of First Nations, Indigenous peoples “recognize the sacredness of water, the interconnectedness of all life and the importance of protecting our water from pollution, drought and waste. Water is the giver of all life, and without clean water all life will perish.”

CWN recognizes the enormous, shared responsibility for the stewardship of water resources in Canada and is dedicated to supporting all water leaders who take on this responsibility. We do this by mobilizing knowledge, convening leaders to share strategic insights, catalyzing collaboration amongst leaders, and in doing so, accelerate collective action across the country.

Year of transition for CWN

2022 was a year of transition for CWN. It included changes in leadership and staff, the release of our strategic plan, and the emergence from the COVID-19 pandemic to a new normal. Throughout these changes, the CWN team has been an extraordinary source of strength and inspiration to me. The team’s kindness, integrity and professionalism are unparalleled. I am very fortunate to work with each and every one of them. I am also fortunate to have an incredibly supportive and enthusiastic Board who encourages the team and me to dream big with a sound business case.

In June, Bernadette Conant passed on the leadership torch as CEO of CWN after 20 years of service. The whole CWN community and the Canadian water sector owe Bernadette a debt of gratitude. She successfully transitioned CWN from a Network of Centres of Excellence to the vibrant, member-driven, end-user-focused organization we see today. Bernadette also elevated national collaboration and dialogue amongst water leaders across Canada. Thank you, Bernadette!



Pictured: Bernadette Conant.



Canadian Water Network
Réseau canadien de l'eau



Pictured: Bev Yee.

I assumed leadership of CWN in June, bringing my experience in leadership positions in provincial and binational municipal water associations. This includes over ten years as deputy director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. The national scope of CWN is incredibly exciting to me, particularly the opportunity to connect with local and regional water-related organizations at the national level.

In October, Bev Yee, former deputy minister of Environment and Parks in the Government of Alberta, stepped down from CWN's Board. It is difficult to overstate Bev's contribution to CWN over the last 10 years. The organization has benefited enormously from her wise counsel and especially from her strategic thinking. On behalf of the board and the entire CWN community, I thank Bev for her decade of service and wish her the very best in her new position in the Alberta Government.



Pictured: Simran Chattha.

This year we welcomed three new staff members: Simran Chattha, M.A., Katina Tam, M.Sc., and Jessica Akande, Ph.D. I am delighted to have such strong talent join the CWN team.

Simran joined CWN as a communications manager in January. Her prior experience includes serving as editor of Water Canada, where she reported on water issues nationally. She also worked in communications roles at WaterTAP and the Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA). Simran holds a Bachelor of Environmental Studies from York University and a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Guelph. She is currently an MBA candidate at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.



Pictured: Katina Tam.

Katina joined our team as a senior program advisor in September. She brings eight years of experience working at the City of Red Deer, where she led water, stormwater, wastewater and urban agriculture initiatives. Katina is a Professional Agrologist with a Bachelor of Science in Global Resource Systems from the University of British Columbia and a Master of Science in Integrated Water Resources Management from McGill University.

Jessica joined our team as a program advisor in November. She comes to us from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). In her role, she organized a climate change symposium and conducted policy reviews. Jessica received her doctorate in conservation biology from the University of Alberta. She also holds a master's degree and a bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Tulane University in New Orleans.



Pictured: Jessica Akande.

In April, CWN released its five-year [strategic plan](#) called Building Communities of the Future Through Water. The strategic plan sets out a new purpose, which is to support communities to achieve an equitable, resilient and healthy future through water. It also highlights our related mission, which is to enable Canada's water leaders to be at the heart of forging pathways for community success. In implementing the strategic



plan, CWN will broaden its scope of work, building on water organizations as anchors in their communities.

Looking back on CWN's 2022 activity

Despite being a transitional year, CWN had a busy 2022 as it emerged from the COVID-19 fog. The CWN team continued to work remotely. Our Municipal Consortium also continued online meetings with members.

Within the **Municipal Consortium program**, we were pleased to welcome back the Region of Halton to the Leaders Group in 2022.



Leaders from Aarhus Vand shared their innovative approach to wastewater servicing during our roundtable with Canadian municipal and utility leaders in March.

In March, leaders from Aarhus Vand, the water utility for the City of Aarhus in Denmark, shared their innovative approach to wastewater servicing. The June leaders' roundtable focused on the challenges and opportunities water leaders face in serving densifying areas in our cities. In October, we brought our consortium leaders together for a strategic discussion on current and emerging trends in the water utility space. Some reflections from our discussion in October will be shared in the January/February 2023 issue of Water Canada's magazine.

In addition to hosting the leaders' roundtables, we also facilitated meetings with our Strategic Sharing Groups throughout the year. These Strategic Sharing Groups did a deep dive into five topics that are important to our members:

- 1. Accelerating net-zero actions in municipal water management:** CWN initiated a Strategic Sharing Group on accelerating net-zero actions in municipal water management, which met three times this year. The group explores actions and approaches to achieving net-zero, such as district energy, cogeneration, renewable energy, resource recovery and conservation. The group is also covering topics that are directed by participants' interests and needs, including how participants can build the business case for net-zero projects. So far, participants have benefited from presentations by:
 - Anglian Water on its roadmap to achieve net zero by 2030.
 - Global Water Intelligence on the state of GHG emissions measurement internationally.
 - Toronto Water on the development of a GHG inventory for its operations.
 - Metro Vancouver on GHG reduction from energy and resource recovery from its water, liquid and solid waste streams.
- 2. Affordability in the context of pandemic-related impacts and trends:** This year, CWN also initiated a Strategic Sharing Group on affordability in the context of pandemic-related impacts and trends. So far, the group has met twice in 2022. This Strategic Sharing Group aims to provide participants with an improved understanding of the challenges and opportunities that municipal utility managers have experienced, and continue to experience, when it comes to identifying community needs and addressing affordability at the local level. Municipalities are adopting diverse and varied approaches to address affordability at the community level. So far, speakers from the Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners and the Regional Municipality of Halifax shared their insights on energy poverty in Canada.



- 3. Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI):** During the Strategic Sharing Session in May, members gained information about where other municipalities and utilities are at in their respective AMI journeys. Members also received information about the key elements considered during business case development and lessons learned, both in the process of implementing AMI and realizing the capabilities of the technology.
- 4. Levels of service:** During our annual check-in with the Levels of Service Strategic Sharing Group, members shared their thoughts and insights on the challenge of balancing costs and levels of service. Members discussed equity, affordability and the goal of sustainably financing levels of service. Insights were gained on the importance of cross-departmental collaboration and engagement with customers, Council and Board members.
- 5. Contaminants of emerging concern (CECs):** We held two sessions with the Strategic Sharing Group on CECs. At a special session in February with Environment and Climate Change Canada, members heard updates on Canada's Chemical Management Plan, the assessment of chemical substances, management of risks posed by CECs and the Federal Wastewater System Effluent Regulations. In September at the annual check-in, participants shared their activities to manage risk associated with CECs. They also heard from the University of Waterloo's Anh Pham about his research with Dr. Wayne Parker on PFAS in biosolids.

Through our **public health and water program**, we continued to build on CWN's work and our members' activities related to wastewater surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 in Canadian communities.

- CWN hosted a virtual dialogue on wastewater-based surveillance with Dr. Steve E. Hrudehy and Bernadette Conant. The virtual dialogue, which took place in February, was titled *The devil is in the details: Emerging insights on the relevance of wastewater surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 to public health*. A paper by the same name has been published in the [Journal of Water and Health](#).
- We welcomed the recognition of CWN's leadership, particularly in supporting coordination and collaboration across sectors during the early months of the pandemic, in a [Royal Society of Canada brief](#) released in August.
- CWN was invited by Dr. Harpreet Kochhar, president of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to participate in PHAC's ongoing strategic consultation on a National Wastewater Surveillance Strategy.
- In late fall, CWN launched a strategic partnership with the National Collaborating Centre on Infectious Diseases (NCCID). The partnership aims to support public health officials, including those who serve Indigenous communities, who want to deepen their knowledge and skills for interpreting and communicating wastewater surveillance data.
- As part of this strategic partnership, NCCID and CWN co-hosted a webinar in November with Dr. Steve E. Hrudehy from the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. Discussants Dr. Michael Becker of PHAC and Monali Varia from Peel Region Public Health also participated in the webinar. The online event was attended by 230 public health officials, researchers, government officials and others involved in wastewater surveillance programs, research and interpretation.

CWN's connections to the international research community continued through our participation in the **Global Water Research Coalition (GWRC)**. I participated in the GWRC board meeting that ran concurrently with the IWA Congress in Copenhagen in September. The GWRC is an impressive coalition of the world's leading water research networks. Collectively, we are able to assemble international collaborations focused on some of the most pressing water issues, including wastewater surveillance, net-zero wastewater, among others.



Pictured from left to right at the NWWC: Cathie O'Toole, Halifax Water; Peter Grevatt, Water Research Foundation; Nicola Crawhall, Canadian Water Network; Graham Gagnon, Dalhousie University; Ryan Johnson, Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Corporation.

I enjoyed attending the Great Lakes Public Forum that took place in Niagara Falls, Ontario in October. I had the opportunity to meet with former colleagues and also hear from Regional Chief Glen Hare of Chiefs of Ontario. He recounted adverse changes that he and other Indigenous peoples are experiencing in the Great Lakes ecosystem. Chief Hare called on the Canadian and US federal governments to enter into an Indigenous-Canada-US agreement on the Great Lakes to address these challenges.

I also joined water sector colleagues from across Canada at the National Water and Wastewater Conference (NWWC) in November in Halifax. I presented on the central importance of partnerships and collaboration in water management and how to make them lasting and effective.

Financial health

CWN is rounding out the calendar year on a firm financial footing with healthy reserves. Our membership and revenues from membership dues have held steady over the course of the year. As this letter 'goes to print' we are in a slight deficit position, for which a short-term deficit reduction plan has been developed and approved by the Board. I am confident that the small gap between revenues and expenses will be bridged before the end of this fiscal year. Details on our financial position as of the end of last fiscal year (FY 2021-22) can be found in our audited financial statements on [our website](#).

Looking ahead to CWN's 2023 activity

As CWN broadens its horizons in 2023 and beyond, we will be forging new partnerships and networking with leaders across Canada who share our passion and dedication towards building equitable, resilient and healthy communities through water.

Bringing leaders together in person is critical to the success of our mission. Planning is already underway for a spring Municipal Consortium leaders' roundtable and the return of our flagship event, Blue Cities, in October 2023. More details will be made available on the [Blue Cities website](#).

Of particular importance to CWN is to embrace and actively support reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Building trusting relationships with Indigenous leaders begins with truth and awareness of our difficult history. That is why all CWN staff will be completing the Indigenous Canada training offered by the University of Alberta.

CWN is forging new strategic partnerships with Indigenous-led water organizations to explore how we can work together to support and learn from water leaders in Indigenous communities, including the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority and the First Nations Infrastructure Institute.

Since adopting our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy in 2022, CWN has been actively engaged in setting goals against which we can measure our progress. In 2023, we will undertake efforts to raise awareness through training and dialogue amongst the CWN team and Board. We will continue to seek opportunities to promote EDI in our internal affairs, our hiring practices and our partnerships.

In terms of our broadened scope of work in 2023 and beyond, CWN will be active in some of the most important national water-related challenges, among them:

- Protecting public health by improving the implementation and application of wastewater surveillance for pathogens.
- Working internationally and domestically on pathways to net-zero in wastewater services.
- Exploring the infrastructure and servicing needs required for new housing to address the housing crisis.
- Framing and facilitating regional collaborations, such as the Lake Ontario Collaborative.
- Anticipating and assessing climate impacts in large working landscapes, and working with water users to adapt to these impacts (starting in the Prairies).

CWN will continue to support its Municipal Consortium leaders with two Leaders Roundtables and a new round of Strategic Sharing Groups on issues of importance to our members. CWN looks forward to learning more about the mandate and activities of the anticipated Canada Water Agency. Collaborating nationally, by connecting the voices of Indigenous, local and regional water leaders at the national level will be critical to the success of the Agency and to the national approach to water management more broadly.

As we enter 2023, I am filled with hope and anticipation for the year ahead, moving forward with CWN's expanded mandate and joining hands across the country with other networks and partners to lift up communities through water. Until then, please feel free to reach out to me and my team to share your thoughts with us and to learn more about our work.

I wish you, your family and your friends a very happy and safe New Year.

Sincerely,



Nicola Crawhall
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Water Network



Canadian Water Network
Réseau canadien de l'eau