

# Guide to Integrated Water Management

Although Canada has a seemingly abundant access of water, there is growing stakeholder awareness that access to water should not be assumed. Canadians have the second highest water usage rates per capita in the OECD trailing only the Americans with whom we share access to our lakes and rivers, and since 1980, overall water use in Canada has increased 26% versus the OECD average of 4.5%.<sup>1</sup>

Whether a company manufactures clothing, produces natural gas, or owns and operates commercial real estate assets, there is increasing concern from stakeholders that water is managed in a way that minimizes impact on communities and the natural environment.

The objective of CBSR's *Guide to Integrated Water Management* is to offer practical insights that will help companies to identify and manage the water-related risks and opportunities that impact their business.

The guide is organized into four main sections:

- A *call to action* that sets the context for water management in Canada,
- An overview of the *business case* to help justify investment in water management including a sector-specific look at challenges and opportunities,
- An *assessment tool* to identify gaps and guide decision-making, and
- A list of *best practice business tools, programs and resources*.

The guide also includes a glossary of terms and bibliography as well as appendices that list web links and relevant industry programs.

## **Definition of Integrated Water Management**

Integrated water management is a framework for water-related decisions and actions which considers not only company requirements but also the needs and interests of impacted stakeholders and the natural environment.

## **Implications for Companies**

Companies recognize that effective management of water-related risks and opportunities leads to better business performance in the long term. Specific risks and opportunities that companies should consider when developing an integrated approach to water management, include:

- Ability to access to water given *increasing consumption, decreasing supply*,
- Impact on reputation and operations if their '*social license to operate*' is threatened,
- Implications of *government regulation, policies and programs*, and
- Savings potential of more *efficient water usage*

The development of an integrated approach to water management that is in line with the potential business impacts can help companies to deliver on stakeholder expectations by addressing water-related risks and opportunities in a proactive way.

## ***The authors***

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<sup>1</sup> OECD website <http://www.environmentalindicators.com/htdocs/indicators/6wate.htm>