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# \$100 MILLION IN CUTS BY HARPER TO DFO FURTHER ENDANGER WATER PROTECTION

by [Brent Patterson](#) | December 28, 2013 | [Analysis](#)

Postmedia News [reports](#),”More than \$100 million in cuts are underway at the federal department in charge of protecting Canada’s water and oceans, despite recommendations from top bureaucrats that it needs to increase spending for both environmental and economic reasons. ...Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government is eliminating about 500 jobs at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans related to Coast Guard services, patrols to stop illegal fishing activities as well as scientific research to promote conservation, protect endangered species, and prevent industrial water pollution.”

“The cuts ... cover 26 different areas of the department which has a workforce of about 10,000 employees. The downsizing also includes the shutdown of federal libraries and millions of dollars in reductions to climate change adaptation programs. ...Other cuts to scientific research at the department include ... \$1.5 million in cuts and about 14 job losses resulting from the transfer of the Experimental Lakes Area, a system of lakes near Kenora in western Ontario where scientists have studied the impacts of industrial pollution on water for decades. ...In total, the department estimates it will cut about \$80 million per year from its budget by 2014-15, and more than \$100 million per year in the following fiscal year.”

The internal briefing note from the deputy minister warns, “Rising marine traffic, technological changes, climate change impacts (such as fluctuating water levels), and extended shipping seasons are among the factors expected to continue to place increased demands on Coast Guard services. For example, there are demands for increasing icebreaking services on the Gulf of St. Lawrence and on the Great Lakes, for extending Marine Communications and Traffic Services, aids to navigation and ice breaking services in the Quebec North and Arctic for additional environmental response as well as search and rescue capacities in selected areas.”

The article adds, “The department’s restructuring also follows a shift in its mandate

from the Harper government's 2012 budget, which introduced what it described as 'responsible resource development' by eliminating a series of environmental laws and replacing them with new ones that significantly reduced federal oversight on industrial development. Those changes revamped a long-standing water pollution prevention law, the Fisheries Act, that required the protection of all fish habitat, replacing it with a new law that only requires the protection of water when humans are nearby."

Council of Canadians chairperson Maude Barlow has [written](#), "In its two omnibus bills — C-38 and C-45 — the Harper government has made drastic and destructive changes to freshwater protection in Canada. It gutted the Fisheries Act, the most powerful tool we had to protect water. The new law no longer protects habitat and is limited to "serious harm" to fish that have commercial, recreational or Aboriginal purposes. It killed the Navigable Waters Protection Act, stripping protections from 99 per cent of lakes and rivers in Canada. Major pipelines and interprovincial power lines now have the green light to cross over and under more than 31,000 lakes and 2.25 million rivers without federal scrutiny. The government is eliminating support for the Experimental Lakes Area, the world's leading freshwater research centre, which has done ground-breaking work on acid rain, household pollutants and mercury contamination. By eliminating the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission, the Harper government has given the green light to fracking companies to dump chemical contaminants into waterways without disclosure of their contents."

To read Barlow's report for Common Causes that outlines many more actions by the Harper government against the public interest, please see [here](#).

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