

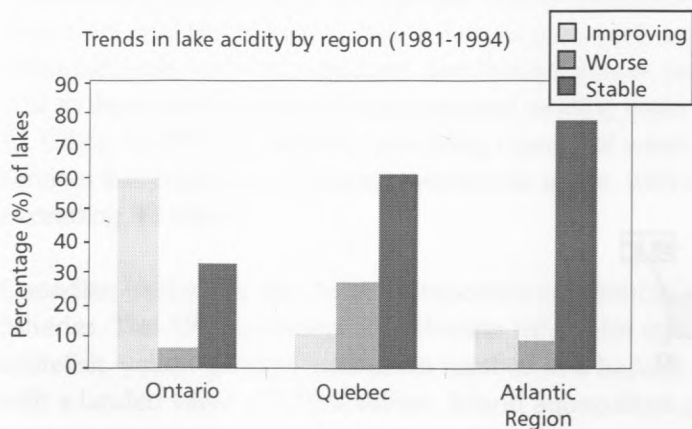
In 1994, in collaboration with municipal governments, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment introduced the National Action Plan to Encourage Municipal Water Use Efficiency. The Plan promotes mandatory water metering, auditing, retrofitting, and charging users according to the volume of water they use. This approach keeps water infrastructure expansion needs to a minimum and enables direct cost recovery for the provision of water and sewer systems. Implementation is being promoted by the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association.

Water Quality

In Canada, surface water is generally plentiful and clean. However, it is sometimes locally or regionally polluted. Pollution enters water bodies in a number of ways, including industrial and municipal discharge, runoff, spills, and deposition of airborne pollutants. In the last half-century, increased amounts of industrial, agricultural, and municipal wastes entering Canadian rivers, lakes, and marine areas have had a serious impact on water quality. Wetlands, which act as natural storm buffers, sinks for pollutants and heavy metals, and regulators of flood water, are being lost across southern Canada.

The Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basins continue to suffer from industrial and municipal pollution, urban and agricultural runoff, and deposition of airborne pollutants. The Red River and other prairie rivers are being degraded by agricultural runoff and inadequately treated sewage. The Fraser River is under pressure from industrial effluents, landfill pollutants, wood treatment chemicals, and forestry and agricultural runoff.

Trends in Lake Acidity in Southeastern Canada



Source: Environment Canada.

Responding to Chemical and Oil Spills

The Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for protecting the Canadian marine environment by responding to chemical and oil spills. It must be prepared to deal with the full range of response issues from oil and chemical spills from ships and handling facilities to spills from an unknown source. For example, in 1991, the CCGS Bartlett was called in to help when the Canadian tanker Eastern Shell, loaded with approximately 1360 tonnes of diesel oil and about 43 tonnes of gasoline, struck rocks and was "holed" while approaching Parry Sound Harbour in Georgian Bay. Within 30 minutes the Coast Guard responded. Extensive cleanup measures ensued, and the total costs incurred were nearly \$1 million. For response to marine spills, the Coast Guard holds counter-measures equipment valued at approximately \$62 million in 72 strategically located storage facilities across Canada.