

Canadian Water and Wastewater Association
The first 25 years: 1986 to 2011

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Introduction

In this brief history, the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association (CWWA) is presented according to major themes with which the organization has dealt since its inception, including its own governance, its relations with other similarly-purposed associations and with governments in Canada and abroad, and research.

Dedication

The story of CWWA is dedicated to the members of the association and to their senior staff who have served as the association's directors and officers, or as members of its various technical committees. Of particular note have been the contributions of the association's presidents and the chairs of the committees - especially their presidents - and as members of its technical committees - particularly their chairs. The participation of these outstanding professionals has contributed greatly to the success of the association over the years.

The common goal of the directors and the technical committees has always been to ensure that Canada's national policy and legislative environment in so far as it affects municipal water and wastewater services is rational, integrated, and positive.

As a former executive director of the association, I am joined by my two predecessors and the current executive director in acknowledging the unselfish and unstinting support of our staff, whose efforts and dedication over the years have contributed much to the success of the association.

Overview

Discussions about creating the CWWA began in 1985, as a consequence of the impending failure of a regionally-based organization that had been established to liaise with federal agencies on a broad range of environmental policies. The possibility of establishing a national association whose members would be the owners of municipal facilities was seen as a more viable and effective alternative. Its purpose would be to represent the interests of Canadian municipal water and wastewater services at the federal and national level and, in return, to provide a channel through which federal agencies could communicate with the sector. The new organization's first meeting took place in November, 1986. From the beginning, its governing board has represented utilities in all provincial and territorial jurisdictions, as well as the six previously existing regional associations of water and wastewater operators. CWWA's membership is corporate and comprises the utilities themselves and the private sector organizations that provide services to the utilities. Other corporate members include academic institutions, industrial associations, and government agencies.

Over the years, membership in the association grew, its services to members expanded, and its staff increased from two to eight. Starting about ten years ago, CWWA transitioned from a traditional board of directors' governance structure to a policy governance model. Since 1986, it

has moved from a tiny space provided within the offices of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), to rented offices, and finally to a permanent home in its own commercial condominium unit.

In December 1989 CWWA hosted its first annual conference, a small gathering that dealt primarily with issues of governance. Since then, attendance has increased, and it has highlighted such topics as drinking water, wastewater, and water conservation. From its earliest years, it also has hosted a growing number of workshops on subjects ranging from rates to on-site wastewater treatment to energy and utility security. It has published a number of guides on utility management, most notably for small to medium utilities. Throughout, it has commented on proposed regulations and assisted federal agencies in considering policy options. To all these activities, it has now also begun participating in the process of developing national and international consensus standards on topics of relevance to utilities.

Above all, CWWA's strengths derive from the many volunteers - generally staff of its corporate membership - who assist in developing technical positions and policy statements for approval by its board.

Origins: 1985 to 1986

The Federation of Associations on the Canadian Environment (FACE) was formed in the early 1970s and had as its constituent members the six regional water and wastewater associations of the time. FACE's objectives were to further national interest in environmental resources generally, including water resources; to be a national and international voice for its constituent members; to coordinate training, education, and certification programs for the water and wastewater sector; and to oversee and stimulate research. By the early 1980s, however, it was apparent that FACE was failing largely because of insufficient funds. Several federal departments, notably Environment Canada and Health Canada, were concerned that such a failure would remove a channel through which they were able to communicate directly with municipalities. It seemed evident that a new national organization supported by direct membership of utilities and private sector companies would be more likely to survive and thrive. Thus the idea for the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association was born. The application for incorporation of CWWA was drafted and submitted in 1986 to the Registrar of Corporations under the *Canadian Corporations Act*. A formal agreement was signed in 1986 between the FCM and FACE supporting formation of CWWA. The president and other representatives of FACE attended CWWA's founding meeting that November, and agreed to "pass the municipal and regional baton" to CWWA.

The Chain of Office

The Chain of Office worn by CWWA Presidents has a storied history. It was designed and created for the Canadian Institute for Pollution Control in 1966, long after CIPC was founded in 1933. The CIPC was affiliated with the US-based Institute for Pollution Control, which over the

years became the Water Environment Federation. The Canadian Institute itself was gradually replaced by regional Pollution Control Associations which first came together to form the FACE organization and then, when that failed, became the current regional Associations supporting CWWA. These regional Pollution Control Associations are the current Canadian Member Associations of WEF. The Chain of Office was donated to the FACE organization in 1971 when that organization was created. In turn, when FACE failed, the Chain of Office was transferred to CWWA. The future of this historic Chain of Office is protected by Article 11 of the By-Laws of CWWA which states in part that:

“In the event of the proposed dissolution of the Association, ownership and possession of the Chain of Office shall be transferred by resolution of the Board or in default of such resolution, any remaining Officer of the Association is instructed and empowered to deliver the Chain of Office to a national federation or institution having objectives as close as possible to those of the Association. In no case shall the Chain of Office be disposed of to an individual or to a corporation other than a non-profit corporation, or to a provincial or regional association or organization.” *(An image of the Chain of Office is shown in Annex A)*

Formative Years: 1986 to 1995

After a contract employee of FCM was appointed the first executive director and space was found within FCM's offices in Ottawa, attention focussed on drafting the constitution and by-laws, and creating a fee and membership structure. The new directors meanwhile focussed on soliciting members. It took a few years for CWWA to attract enough members to independently finance the organization - at first financial contributions from the federal government defrayed some staff salaries. But from the beginning, membership did grow, thanks largely to CWWA's directors, who actively approached and persuaded their peers to join. In addition to the six regional associations, there were in due course members from every province except British Columbia which was last to sign on. Meetings were also held with the American Water Works Association (AWWA) to ensure that association was comfortable with the scope and role of CWWA. Ultimately, a partnering agreement was signed with AWWA.

Not long after its formation, CWWA oversaw a number of studies and surveys (see Research and Publications section below), with financial support from both Environment Canada and Health Canada. As well, the association co-sponsored with Health Canada several of the National Conferences on Drinking Water organized by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water, its own annual conferences, and the First National Conference on Water Conservation (1992) co-hosted with Environment Canada. Technical committees operated by CWWA include a Research and Development Committee, and a Training, Education, and Certification Committee and which were Committees of the Board.

Relations with the Regional Associations

From its inception, CWWA was strongly supported by the Western Canada Water and Wastewater Association (now Western Canada Water), the Ontario Water Works Association (a section of AWWA), the Pollution Control Association of Ontario (now the Water Environment Association of Ontario), l'Association québécoise des techniques de l'eau (now RÉSEAU environnement), and the Atlantic Canada Water Works Association (now Atlantic Canada Water and Wastewater Association). Before it became part of the Western Canada Water Association, the Northern Territories Water and Wastewater Association also supported CWWA. Although it participated in the discussions leading to CWWA's formation, the British Columbia Water and Waste Association joined later in the 1990s.

There was some concern that CWWA would overlap the interests and activities of the regional associations, but strenuous efforts were made to ensure this did not happen. CWWA's focus was on representing municipal policy and regulatory interests to the federal government, and providing opportunities for utility managers to network with colleagues from across Canada. CWWA did not undertake to train operators or to organize conferences or workshops that would appeal to frontline utility employees - the recognized roles of the regional associations.

CWWA has occasionally held discussions on topics of mutual interest with the Canadian Public Works Association (CPWA) as some of the responsibilities of their memberships overlap. Nonetheless, it has always been clear that CWWA's brief is strictly with water and wastewater, and that it would not become involved in issues relevant to other public works such as roads or bridges.

Canada-USA Links

Many of CWWA's utility members have long been members of the AWWA, primarily through the regional associations that are AWWA affiliates. It was natural, therefore to build a good relationship between the two national organizations. To that end, a regularly renewed partnering agreement was signed at the 1999 AWWA convention in Chicago.

A similar agreement with the Water Environment Federation (WEF) was sought in 2002. Due to differences in WEF's membership structure, however, a different arrangement emerged wherein WEF provides an annual payment to CWWA to liaise with the Canadian federal government, a function WEF does not itself undertake. A partnering agreement with the American Public Works Association was also considered, but there was insufficient interest or overlap to bring this to fruition.

Emerging International Links

Due largely to Canadian involvement in international standardization activities, to contacts with the International Water Association (IWA), and the development of the internet, CWWA is

recognized by its counterparts abroad as *the* national association representing Canadian municipal water and wastewater services. Relationships have been forged with similarly-purposed associations in Australia, Germany, Israel, Japan, Morocco, South Africa, and Zambia, and with regional associations representing parts of Africa and the Americas. These connections led to Canada being selected to host the 2010 Annual Congress of the IWA, which was held in Montréal and co-hosted by CWWA and the Canadian Association for Water Quality.

Research and Publications Development

Research and preparing publications have always been among CWWA's primary functions. One of CWWA's earliest research contracts was undertaken for Health Canada which was considering a reduction from 300 to 50 micrograms/L ($\mu\text{g/L}$) in the limit of the water quality parameter for trihalomethanes (THMs), and wanted data on levels and an assessment of the impact on utilities of such a reduction.

CWWA contacted every Canadian municipality with a population over 25,000 and made some astounding discoveries! Many communities had never heard of THMs. Others had heard of them but never tested. Those that did test generally could comply with the then current 300 ($\mu\text{g/L}$), but few would be able to meet the proposed limit without major investment. As a result of CWWA's research, Health Canada acquired the information needed to calculate the health risk-benefit of its proposal, and adjusted the proposed level of 50 $\mu\text{g/L}$ upward to 100 $\mu\text{g/L}$. At the same time, CWWA gained recognition from many non-member utilities as a potentially useful organization.

An early survey conducted for Environment Canada identified the number and type of wastewater treatment plants across the country - no doubt anticipating the department's emerging interest in wastewater effluent discharges to the environment. Like the THM survey, this work both provided highly useful information to a federal department, and greatly increased CWWA's visibility and standing among non-members.

Fear of Y2K prompted federal emergency planners to have CWWA conduct a utility preparedness survey. Most had plans in place. One had gone so far as to plan a New Year's Eve party onsite so that if worse came to worse, staff would be on hand to solve any problems. Of course, the year 2000 ticked over without a hitch and they had a good party.

Other surveys covered such topics as knowledge of contaminants entering sewer systems; infrastructure renewal cost estimates; metering and water rates; operator training, education, and certification; disinfection practices for each water and for wastewater; biosolids; evidentiary sampling practices; fog management practices; municipal liability; small and remote system design and operation; vulnerability analysis; and the application of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points to water utilities (also known as water safety plans). The survey results often prompted publication of best management practices (BMP) guides.

CWWA technical committees devolved from the board to the staff and have been established for drinking water quality, wastewater quality, biosolids, energy, rates, conservation and efficiency, metering, and operator certification. Committee members, who come predominantly from larger utilities, have been instrumental in designing and conducting the surveys, in drafting BMP

publications and in formulating positions on federal regulatory initiatives and policies directed to utility activities.

Communications

Two-way communication between CWWA and its members is of course critical to the activities and existence of the association. In the beginning, the *CWWA Bulletin*, first published in the fall of 1987, was a quarterly. Gradually, its frequency increased and it now is published ten times a year. Other changes include a new logo, smaller type, and most noticeably, the way it is delivered. Although hard copies are still available, most readers of the *Bulletin* now do so online.

Similarly, *CWWA Communiqués*, sent first by mail, then fax, and now electronically, get time sensitive updates directly to the members most concerned about the subject covered. For example international trade mission information is sent only to members who have indicated an interest in export market development. *CWWA's Members' Briefing Book* is a reference that provides succinct information on such topics as which federal departments administer which acts and regulations, and which national or international programs are relevant to utilities. As well, CWWA's website provides general information on the association, its programs, and activities to all comers,

Finally, conferences and workshops are also an aspect of communications between CWWA and its members. By hosting such events across the country, often in conjunction with board meetings, CWWA has promoted a two-way flow of information and promoted inter-regional communication amongst its members.

Evolving Relations with Government

CWWA has always had excellent relations with federal agencies which view CWWA as a reliable source of information and advice on strategic issues affecting municipal water and wastewater services. CWWA's responses to proposed regulations are recognized as being based on well-considered facts. CWWA has suggested ways of achieving the desired outcomes of the proposed regulation that would have a lower cost to municipalities; a result consistent with federal regulatory impact analysis objectives.

CWWA is in regular contact with Agriculture Canada, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Environment Canada, Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Health Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Industry Canada, National Defense, Natural Resources Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, Parks Canada, Penitentiary Services Canada, Public Safety Canada, Public Works Canada, and the Treasury Board. Despite having a good rapport during the policy and regulatory development stages, it is inevitable that once regulations are in force, the relationship may well become adversarial. When this has been the case, CWWA has never shirked from stating its members' views.

Through its consistent support and interaction with the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on Drinking Water, and the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's committees or task groups dealing with wastewater effluents, biosolids, and water quality, CWWA has earned the respect of provincial governments and their departments. CWWA has always respected its initial agreement with the regional water and wastewater associations and refrained from submitting comments on provincial or territorial policy or regulatory matters.

CWWA has consistently urged provincial and federal agencies to acknowledge that for municipal utilities, stewardship of the environment and of public health are core objectives CWWA has sought, but not yet achieved formal recognition that it be a partner in developing and establishing regulatory requirements and policies - rather than have its members be the targets of such requirements with whom discussions need take place only after regulations and policies have already been drafted. This was particularly evident when CWWA sought but failed to form a Biosolids Partnership in which municipalities would be at the table from the outset, as had been done in the US and Australia. The struggle for such recognition will continue.

Standards vs. Regulations

“There ‘oughta’ be a law!” is a common Canadian response to adverse situations; not surprisingly, federal and provincial agencies alike have applied this approach to the municipal water and wastewater services sector. There are difficulties with the traditional approach to developing regulations: they usually take a long time to develop, are usually prescriptive rather than performance-based, and allow little opportunity for innovation or alternative approaches. Following the Walkerton tragedy, for example, the ensuing slew of regulations placed an enormous burden on water services. When consultations on regulatory provisions do occur, they often do so in a non-rational climate - that is, in response to public fear, media attention, lobbying, or political pressure. For instance, during recent discussions on managing wastewater effluents, CWWA urged consideration of using provincial regulations to govern industrial discharges into municipal sewers rather than regulating end-of-pipe solutions. The idea was not accepted, even though there could and would have been uniform requirements across all industries in all provinces and helped wastewater utilities meet effluent discharge conditions.

There is an alternative to a purely regulatory regime; consensus standards for system or technological design specifications or performance requirements. In the late 1990s, several standards organizations responded to municipal requests for standards covering non-regulated issues in the water and wastewater sector, such as the efficiency of water-using appliances, design and performance of distribution and collection system components, grease interceptors, and even water and wastewater service performance assessments. Such standards continue to be developed nationally (e.g. by BNQ, CSA, and ULC), in the US (ASME and NSF International), and internationally, where the ISO has developed standards for utility performance assessment, crisis management, and asset management among many others. CWWA and its members have participated directly in the work of establishing these standards. Unlike regulations, standards development occurs in a true multi-stakeholder environment of consensus in which municipalities and utilities are full partners.

Governance Evolution

The initial CWWA governance model was a traditional one in which the board of directors effectively made all decisions, and the executive director carried them out. Board members and/or staff from member utilities or organizations sat on various technical, governance, and/or activity-oriented committees dealing with such matters as membership, finance, nominations, and conferences. These communicated on an as-needed basis and met primarily at annual meetings. As well, there was an executive committee comprising CWWA's officers which in addition to teleconferencing, generally met three times a year. By the late 1990s, however, this structure was seen as imposing an excessive burden on the associations' directors.

Since 1986, the directors have periodically reviewed the goals and objectives of the association and undertaken strategic planning. In 2002, the board considered changing to a policy governance model in which the board establishes "Policy Ends", and the executive director is authorized to implement them within what are termed "Executive Limitations." In this model, the board also sets policies governing its own behaviour and its interactions with the executive director. The proposal was agreeable to both the board and the executive director of the day, and the process of transitioning to this model began in 2003. It has taken several years to effect the transition which entailed providing training on policy governance to the board, amending the by-laws, and preparing governance policies.

The Future

Today the CWWA is firmly established as the national voice of municipal water and wastewater services; it has a well-earned reputation for providing timely and relevant information to its members, and sound advice and comments to Federal and Provincial-Territorial agencies whose policies and programs affect the delivery of essential water and wastewater services to Canadian residents.

Annex A - The CWWA Chain of Office



Annex B - Presidents of the CWWA

Years	President
1986 - 1988	W. H. Gates
1988 - 1989	R. H. Ferguson
1989 - 1990	A. J. Schwinghammer
1990 - 1991	E. T. Podivinski
1991 - 1993	W. M. Butler
1993 - 1994	C. Charette
1994 - 1995	D. McTavish
1995 - 1996	K. J. Brothers
1996 - 1997	D. Levert
1997 - 1998	L. King
1998 - 2000	T. Gillespie
2000 - 2001	D. W. Scott
2001 - 2002	R. Patterson
2002 - 2003	B. MacBride
2003 - 2004	A. Proulx
2004 - 2005	R. J. Jones
2005 - 2006	A. Aubin
2006 - 2007	P. Hanlon
2007 - 2008	L. Winsor
2008 - 2009	T. Schmidt
2009 - 2010	G. Chartier
2010 - 2011	R. DiLabio