

Water Availability

Alberta Online Engagement

Enhancing Water Availability - Brief

The Government of Alberta wants to understand your views on the water management system in Alberta.

The Government of Alberta wants to hear from Albertans on opportunities or barriers that can be addressed to enhance the water management system in Alberta and increase water availability for sustainable growth for all water using sectors. We want to hear from Albertans on how Alberta can best:

- increase water conservation, efficiency, and productivity;
- free up and optimize use of available water;
- better capture and improve access to existing water sources; and
- improve water management and make faster approval decisions.

This survey is intended for Albertans and Alberta organizations and communities who would like to provide general input. Another, more detailed survey is available for those who would like to provide more detailed feedback. Both surveys are available online.

Your input may help inform government programs, policy or tools to increase water availability and improve the water management system in Alberta.

The survey is separated into nine sections: one introductory section, seven topic-based sections, and one conclusion.

Topics include:

- Water measurement and reporting
- Water conservation, efficiency and productivity
- Water allocation and transfers
- Use of rainwater
- Alternative water sources and wastewater reuse
- Inter-basin water transfers
- Exemptions from water authorizations

If you would like, you can [download a copy of the survey questions](#). We recommend you read through all of the questions before completing the survey.

The survey will take 10-20 minutes to complete and closes January 10, 2025.

FOIP Collection Notice

Your privacy is important

The views or opinions you provide, as well as the personal information about you, are protected by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. We are collecting this information to help inform decisions about water availability, as authorized by Section 33(c) of the FOIP Act. We will not use or disclose your personal information for any other purpose without your written consent or unless required to do so by law.

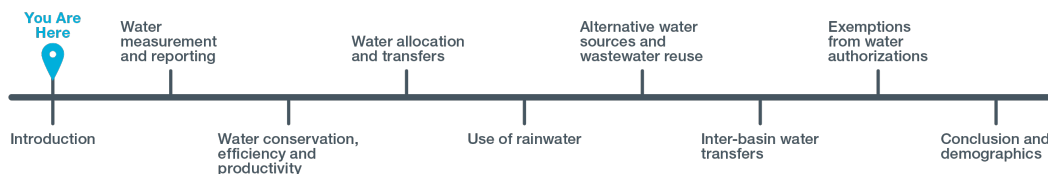
If you have questions about how we collect or use your information, contact Executive Director of Water Availability and Partnerships at 9820 106 St, Edmonton, by calling 780-903-3705 or emailing epa.water@gov.ab.ca.

Please do not submit responses that include personal information about other people.

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Introduction



What do you think should be the top priorities for the province when considering long term effectiveness of the water management system and water availability? Select up to three.

(Choose any 3 options)

- Environmental protection: Prioritize the conservation of natural water bodies, ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- Conservation, efficiency, and productivity: Promote water-saving technologies, practices, and infrastructure to encourage reduced water use.
- Climate-related adaptation: Incorporate strategies for managing the impacts of water variability, such as droughts, floods, and changing precipitation patterns.
- Water related data collection: Prioritize the collection of data and information to better understand how much and how water is being used by different licences in the province.
- Green infrastructure investment: Use natural processes to enhance water availability, such as conservation and restoration of wetlands, soil moisture retention, and groundwater recharge.
- Grey infrastructure investment: Prioritize investments in resilient water infrastructure, such as treatment plants, distribution networks, and stormwater management systems.
- Water storage: Increase the capacity of existing storage or build new reservoirs.
- Water reuse: Enhance water and wastewater reuse, set standards and promote water cleaning technologies to allow for water to be re-used, and/or clarify use of rainwater and stormwater.
- Water licensing: Improve water transfers to accommodate need and demand. Update water allocation to accommodate need and demand.
- Other (please specify)

What do you think are the opportunities to manage water more effectively in Alberta? If possible, provide specific example(s).

What challenges or barriers do you see within the current water management system in Alberta? If possible, provide specific example(s).

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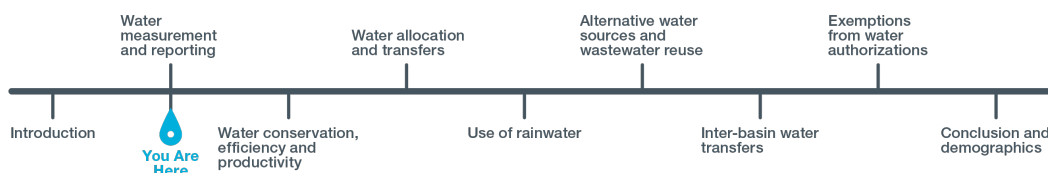
Please share any other comments on what you think should be the top priorities for the province when considering review of water management legislation, policies, programs, or approaches.

The following sections of the survey explore specific challenges and opportunities that we have heard from stakeholders, as outlined in the infographic above. You can answer questions in each of these sections or jump to the end of the survey to answer a few questions about demographics and add any other comments you have.

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Proceed to topic-specific sections of the survey
- Jump to demographics and final comments

Water measurement and reporting



Alberta takes a practical approach to water use reporting requirements. To minimize financial and time burdens on Albertans, most licensees (tens of thousands) are relatively small and therefore generally have not been required to report any information. The department has placed basic mandatory reporting conditions on most medium to large licences (several thousand licensees, which account for most of the water allocated in Alberta) – though some old licences have no requirements.

Water use reporting by licensees is varied and inconsistent. Changes to the *Water Act* could help improve the consistency and timeliness of reporting, helping to ensure the data submitted is accurate, supports compliance, and is more transparent and accessible.

Learn more in the [Water Measurement and Reporting issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding water measurement and reporting?

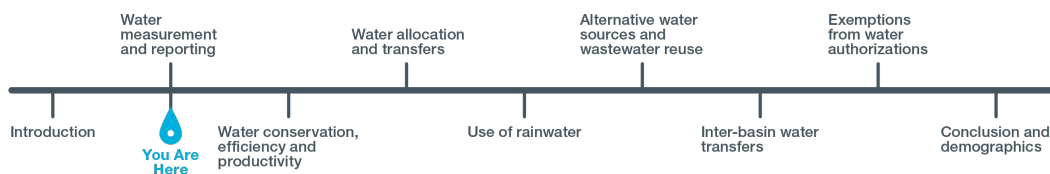
(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more in the [Water Measurement and Reporting issue sheet](#).

Is the right information currently available to support your water management needs?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- No opinion

Answer this question only if you have chosen No for Is the right information currently available to support your water management needs?

What other information could support your water management needs? If possible, provide specific example(s).

Do you think the government should take steps to address challenges of data collection, availability and usability?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- No opinion

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Please share any ideas you have for how the government could address the challenges. If possible, provide specific example(s).

Do you think the government should consider introducing water use measurement and reporting requirements to additional water licences?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know
- No opinion

Are there other ways that the Government of Alberta could address the challenges of data collection, availability, and usability outside of mandatory reporting requirements?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

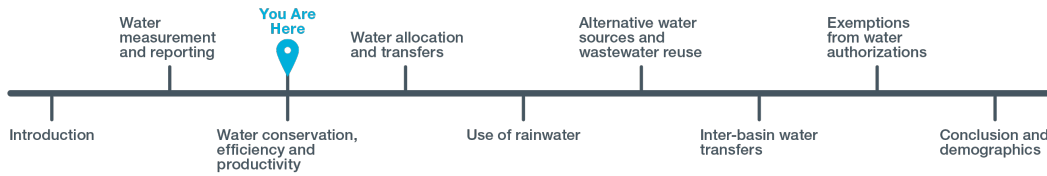
Please explain. If possible, provide specific example(s)

Please provide any additional comments you have about water measurement and reporting.

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Water conservation efficiency and productivity



Managing demand by conserving water, using it efficiently, and improving productivity is one way to address changes in water availability. By using water efficiently, we can make sure we get the most from every drop. Reducing water demand use can also help delay or avoid the need for building expensive water storage infrastructure.

- Water conservation is a reduction in water use, loss, or waste.
- Water efficiency is the accomplishment of a function, task, process, or result with the minimal amount of water feasible.
- Water productivity is the amount of water needed to produce a unit of any good, service, or societal value.

Learn more in the [Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding water conservation, efficiency and productivity?

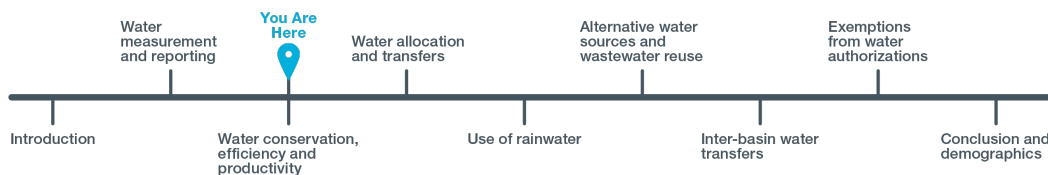
(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more in the [Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity issue sheet](#).

Which, if any, of the following strategies to conserve water and increase efficiency and productivity should Alberta consider?

(Choose all that apply)

- Enhance public education and awareness of water use
- Incentivize water saving technologies
- Voluntary province-wide or area-specific water saving targets
- Mandatory province-wide or area-specific water saving targets
- Voluntary sector-specific or cross-sectoral water use goals or targets (efficiency or productivity targets)
- Mandatory sector-specific or cross-sectoral water use goals or targets (efficiency or productivity targets)
- Mandatory water audits
- Installation of indoor low-flow appliances
- Encouraging use of drought resistant plants and landscaping
- Water pricing
- Water rights (licences) trading
- Other (please specify)

Please expand on your answers. If possible, provide specific example(s).

Which of the following best reflect your position?

(Choose any one option)

- Government (through general revenue / taxpayers) should bear the cost of improvements to water conservation, efficiency and productivity.
- Water users should bear the cost of improvements to water conservation, efficiency and productivity.
- Government and water users should share the cost of improvements to water conservation, efficiency and productivity.
- Other (please specify)

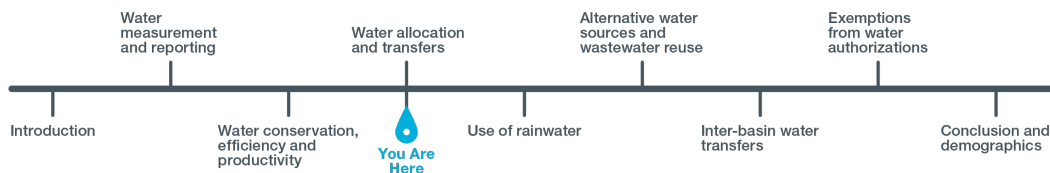
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What technology and innovation is available and emergent for more effective water use and management – efficiency, productivity, infrastructure? If possible, provide specific example(s).

Please provide any additional comments you have about water conservation, efficiency and productivity.

Water allocations and transfers



Unless there is a specific exemption, anyone that wants to use surface or groundwater in Alberta requires a licence (allocation) under the *Water Act*.

All water allocation licences and transfers are reviewed by the department to consider and mitigate impacts on other water users and the environment, prior to approval.

To get a water licence in southern Alberta (Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan River sub-basins) where no new water allocations are available, people or businesses must negotiate with current water licence holders to buy and transfer all or part of their water rights.

Potential amendments to the *Water Act* and policy changes could help to address fairness and transparency in the existing licensing and transfer system to address system pressures.

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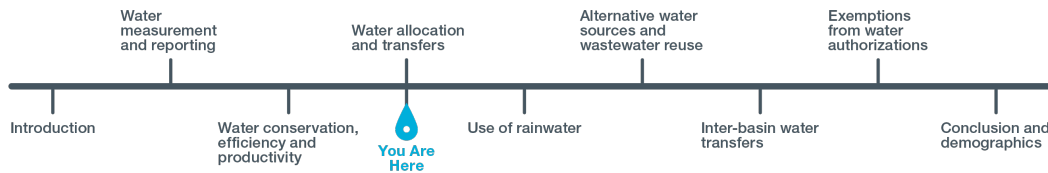
Learn more about water allocations and transfers in the [Water Allocations and Transfers issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding water allocations and transfers?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Water allocations

A water allocation is the assignment of volume, rate, and timing of a diversion of water for a specified use. Water allocations are regulated under a licence through the *Water Act*.

Under what, if any, circumstance should the government be able to review and amend a water licence? Select all that apply.

(Choose all that apply)

- If the water licence holder cannot demonstrate why the water is needed
- If the water licence holder cannot demonstrate how the water is being used
- If water availability conditions have changed significantly
- If policy direction has changed significantly
- If the basin is closed (no further allocations)
- None
- Other (please specify)

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Please provide additional context for your answers. If possible, provide specific example(s).

Are there other ways that the Government of Alberta could address the challenges of water licences?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for Are there other ways that the Government of Alberta could address the challenges of water licences?

What are your ideas? If possible, provide specific example(s).

Water transfers

A water transfer is the process by which a water licence holder transfers all or part of their water allocation to another user under a licence as regulated through the *Water Act*.

Do you support making water transfers more transparent?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

What, if any, cost or fee should apply to users who trade or transfer water? Select all that apply.

(Choose all that apply)

- Financial fee (to support the government's ability to better manage water for all Albertans)
- Water fee (to go back into the environment)
- None
- Other (please specify)

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Please provide additional context for your answers. If possible, provide specific example(s).

Are there means to improve water allocations, licensing, and transfers? If possible, provide specific example(s).

Please provide any additional comments you have about allocations, licensing, and transfers.

Use of rainwater



In the water management system in Alberta, rainwater is rain or snow that is collected from a roof surface or rainwater collection system. Rainwater is usually higher quality than stormwater because it has not flowed over ground surfaces (e.g., parking lots or streets) and has not been in contact with potential sources of contamination (e.g., fertilizer, herbicide/pesticide, pet waste, oil, grease, anti-freeze).

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The *Water Act* does not currently define rainwater or precipitation. Without clarity, it can be misinterpreted that any volume of rainwater could be collected (harvested), stored and used without a licence or any oversight.

If large amounts of rainwater are used without a licence, it could affect nearby water sources and other water users by reducing the runoff that fills streams and rivers.

Learn more about defining rainwater in the [Use of Rainwater issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding rainwater?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more about defining rainwater in the [Use of Rainwater issue sheet](#).

Do you think a licence should be required for rainwater collection above a certain amount? (Note: residential rain barrels would not require a licence).

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for Do you think a licence should be required for rainwater collection above a certain amount? (Note: residential rain barrels would not require a licence).

What amount?

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Aside from a small exemption for rainwater, should the government consider other potential exemptions for rainwater use?

(Choose any one option)

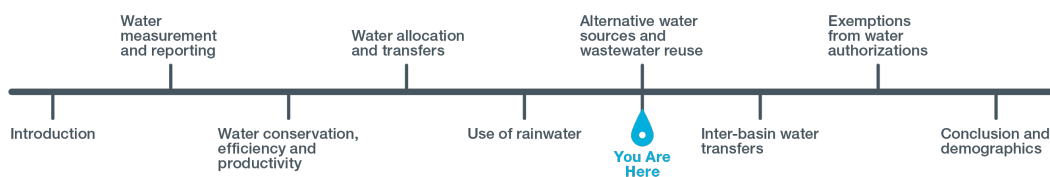
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for Aside from a small exemption for rainwater, should the government consider other potential exemptions for rainwater use?

What should they be?

Please provide any additional comments you have about use of rainwater.

Alternative water sources and wastewater reuse



For most of Alberta's history, the water licensing system has focused on allocating the readily available, natural water sources in the environment such as rivers, creeks, lakes, groundwater aquifers, or wetlands. Alternative water sources also exist, including:

- wastewater (water that has already been used by a licence holder)
- stormwater (water that has been collected on the ground)
- rainwater (water collected from a roof or rainwater collection system)
- greywater (water drained from baths, sinks, washing machines, or kitchen appliances in domestic buildings, excluding toilet water)

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Using these sources of water can supplement our existing water supplies while providing environmental and economic benefits.

There may be opportunities to recognize alternative water sources in the *Water Act* as a part of the water management system, more clearly defining Alberta's authority for continued regulatory oversight.

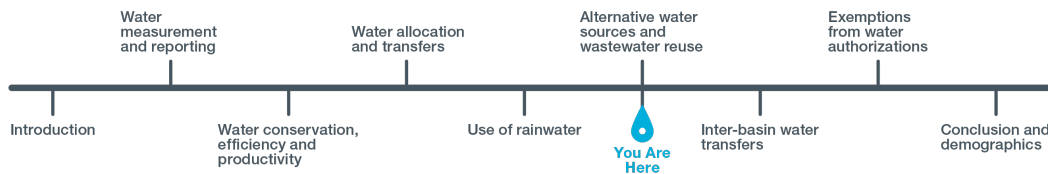
Learn more in the [Alternative Water Sources and Wastewater Reuse issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding alternative water sources and wastewater reuse?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more in the [Alternative Water Sources and Wastewater Reuse issue sheet](#).

How would you rate the following benefits to alternative sources and wastewater reuse?

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How would you rate the following benefits to alternative sources and wastewater reuse?

Questions	Not beneficial	Moderately beneficial	Very beneficial	I don't know
Reduces the impact on the natural environment by offsetting diversions that would otherwise come from rivers, lakes, streams or aquifers				
Can create local alternative supply options and drought resiliency for some types of water users				
Reduces the need for larger infrastructure to transport water larger distances from the source to end-user				
Reduced treatment and transportation financial and energy costs				

Are there other benefits to consider?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

Please explain. If possible, provide specific example(s).

How would you rate the following challenges to alternative sources and wastewater reuse?

Questions	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
Cost of setting up and maintaining the system					
Regulatory requirements					
Lack of standards for the safe reuse of water and wastewater or quality requirements					
Health concerns over reusing water and wastewater indoors or outdoors					
Potential environmental impacts resulting from decreased return flows to the environment					
Potential impacts to downstream users					
Public perception and acceptance of the reuse of water or wastewater					

Are there other challenges to consider?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

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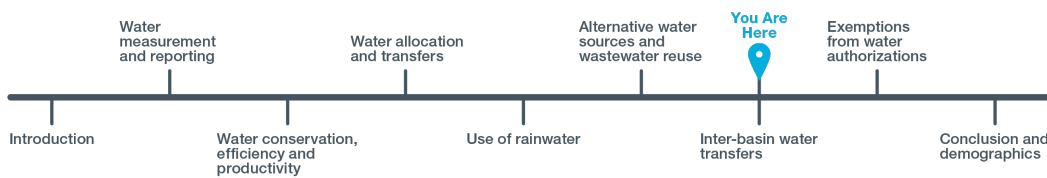
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Please explain. If possible, provide specific example(s).

What, if any, concerns do you have regarding alternative water sources and wastewater reuse? If possible, provide specific example(s).

Please provide any additional comments you have about alternative water sources and wastewater reuse.

Inter-basin water transfers



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An inter-basin transfer is a water licence that allows water from one river basin to be used in another river basin.

The *Water Act* does not prohibit inter-basin transfers, however it does require they be authorized by a special Act of the Legislature. Since 1999, six special Acts have been passed, all for regional pipelines carrying municipally treated drinking water.

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas could consider identifying criteria and thresholds for inter-basin transfers that pose a low risk to the environment and other users, where a special Act would not have to be passed by the Legislature to issue the licence.

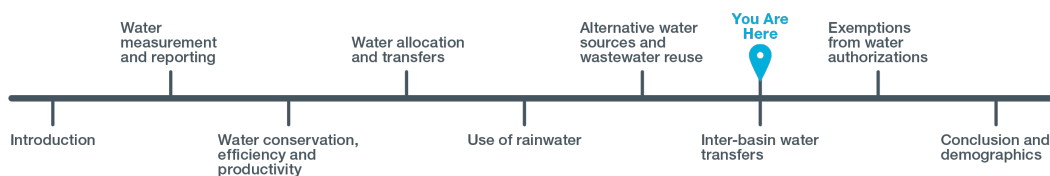
Learn more about inter-basin transfers in the [Inter-basin Transfer issue sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding inter-basin transfers?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- Skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more about inter-basin transfers in the [Inter-basin Transfer issue sheet](#).

Where or under which, if any, circumstances do you think an inter-basin transfer could be appropriate or necessary without a special Act of the Legislature? Select all that apply.

(Choose all that apply)

- Drinking water for communities, such as regional water systems
- Where environmental impacts would be greater if sourcing water from the local basin
- Water for projects that straddle two major river basins
- Where volumes would have negligible environmental impact
- None
- Other (please specify)

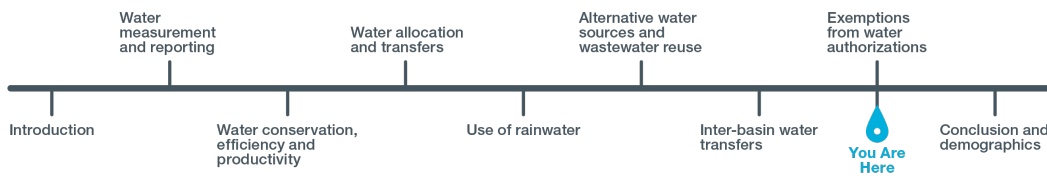
What, if any, concerns do you have regarding inter-basin transfers and the need for a special Act of the Legislature?

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Please provide any additional comments you have about inter-basin transfers.

Exemptions from water authorizations



The Government of Alberta has established exemptions for certain types or categories of water activities and uses, which allows Albertans to use or impact water without having to apply for an authorization. Typically, these activities and uses are relatively small, considered low risk, and have minimal or manageable effects on other water users or the environment.

Probably the most common are the exemptions for specified household purposes and agricultural users of water. Other exemptions include, but are not limited to:

- fire fighting
- certain agricultural dugouts
- stormwater from a defined storm drainage facility
- saline (salt) groundwater
- temporary camps
- alternative watering systems for livestock
- manual pump water wells
- landscaping
- dewatering sand and gravel or construction sites
- building ice bridges in certain defined areas
- certain wetland replacement projects

Changes to existing exemptions, or introducing new exemptions could improve water accessibility and availability to certain sources of water and remove unnecessary regulatory burden for Albertans.

Learn more in the [Exemptions from Water Authorizations issues sheet](#).

Do you want to answer questions regarding exemptions from water authorizations?

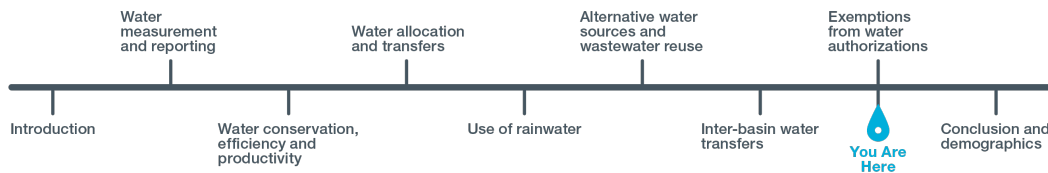
(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No, skip to conclusion and demographics

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Learn more in the [Exemptions from Water Authorizations issues sheet](#).

Are there any circumstances or activities where you think additional or larger exemptions should be explored?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

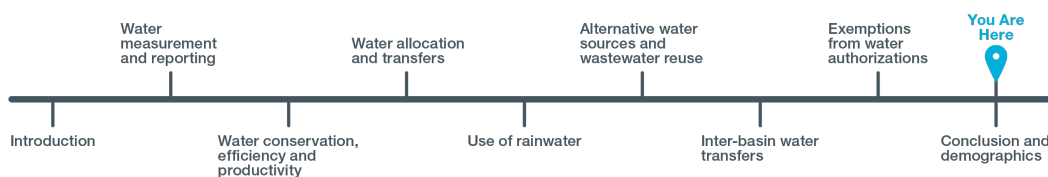
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Please explain. If possible, provide specific example(s).

Please provide any additional comments you have about exemptions from water authorizations.

Conclusion and demographics



Are there any other opportunities to optimize water availability in Alberta?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for Are there any other opportunities to optimize water availability in Alberta?

If yes: Please explain. If so, provide specific example(s).

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Do you have any other additional concerns about water management in the province that you would like to share? If yes, please explain. If possible, provide specific examples.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Please tell us about yourself

What are the first three characters of your postal code?

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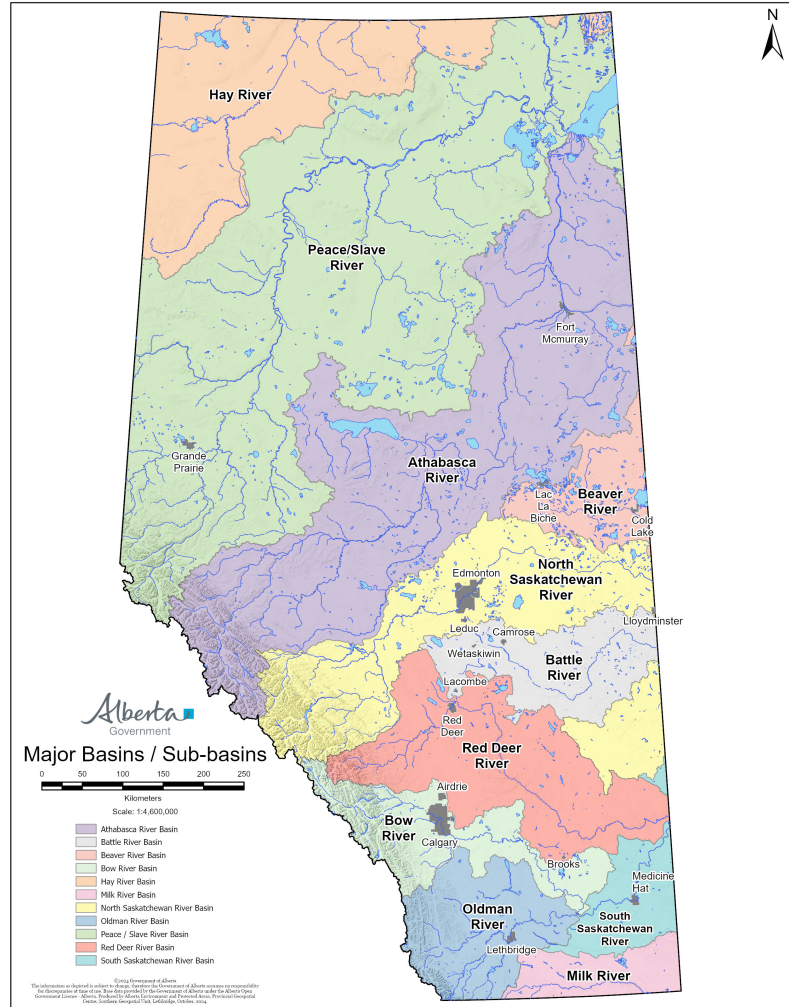
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Please specify your representation. Select all that apply.

(Choose all that apply)

- I am answering as an individual
- First Nations communities and organizations
- Metis communities and organizations
- Municipality
- Non-governmental organization
- Tourism/recreation
- Irrigated agriculture
- Dryland agriculture
- Agri-processing
- Forestry
- Power generation
- Upstream oil and gas
- Downstream petroleum products
- Commercial
- Academic
- Technology
- Industry (other)
- Other (please specify)

If you are participating in this survey on behalf of an organization, please share the name of the organization.



Which basin(s) do you live in, or your organization operate in? Select all that apply.

(Choose all that apply)

- Hay River Basin
- Peace / Slave River Basin
- Athabasca River Basin
- Beaver River Basin
- North Saskatchewan River Basin
- Battle River Basin
- Red Deer River Basin
- Bow River Basin
- Oldman River Basin
- South Saskatchewan River Basin
- Milk River Basin
- None of the above
- I don't know

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How was your experience providing your feedback today?

(Choose any one option)

- Poor
- Acceptable
- Good

Why was your experience poor?

Answer this question only if you have chosen Acceptable for How was your experience providing your feedback today?

Why was your experience acceptable?

Answer this question only if you have chosen Good for How was your experience providing your feedback today?

Why was your experience good?