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Book Notes: Eau Canada: The Future Of Canada's Water, by Karen Bakker (ed)

Catherine Guirguis

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Abstract

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EAU CANADA: THE FUTURE OF CANADA'S WATER. EDITED BY KAREN BAKKER. VANCOUVER: UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA PRESS, 2007. Pp. 440. \$29.95 paperback.

BY CATHERINE GUIRGUIS

Canada's water has been neglected and misunderstood by government for far too long, according to the contributing authors of *Eau Canada*. Providing a thorough examination of different aspects of the current availability and the management of water, the book as a whole stresses the need to adopt a more comprehensive water governance policy. The authors of each chapter approach the situation differently—some call for more public participation, others for a new approach incorporating indigenous peoples' ethics and values, for instance—but all arrive at a common conclusion: the pressing need for fundamental changes to the current water governance regime.

The initial chapters are an attempt to expose a pervasive misunderstanding at the root of the problem: the apparent abundance of fresh water in Canada. Citing quotes from news broadcasts, articles, and politicians' statements, a number of the authors seek to dispel the myth that Canada has more than one-fifth of the world's fresh water supply. In reality, these authors suggest the figure is closer to 6.5 per cent of the world's renewable fresh water supply. Further, they warn that much of this reduced estimate remains unavailable to the southern—and most populated—regions of the country, as it flows to arctic regions. From there, the following chapters illuminate how this misconception may have led to the low priority water has traditionally received, resulting in neglect of proper conservation methods and quality management.

Gaps in water governance come in many forms. Several authors cited recent controversies, such as what happened in Walkerton, Ontario, where privatization of water management by the provincial government resulted in the illness and death of community members, as evidence that governments have overlooked the benefits of localized source protection. Among the other gaps in water governance discussed by the authors is the issue of constitutional barriers, which prevent effective national leadership. Water management typically falls within provincial jurisdiction, leaving the federal government to design vague

policies to deal with international challenges, such as water diversion projects across the U.S.-Canada border.

Amongst the dialogue provided throughout the book between the different authors, central objectives are common in each author's contribution: cooperation with communities and involvement of all levels of government is necessary for any solution to the current flaws in Canada's water management.