

# WCW&WA Convention received a powerful message from Keynote Speaker Tommy Banks

The 2007 Western Canada Water and Wastewater Association's Conference attracted a large turnout at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton. Senator Tommy Banks, O.C., A.O.E., L.L.D., a Juno Award-winning musician, proved he was also one of Canada's most versatile entertainers as a Keynote Speaker.

His address was a wide-ranging description of the past and present of drinking water, and he gave some powerful recommendations to address Canadian water resource problems and opportunities.

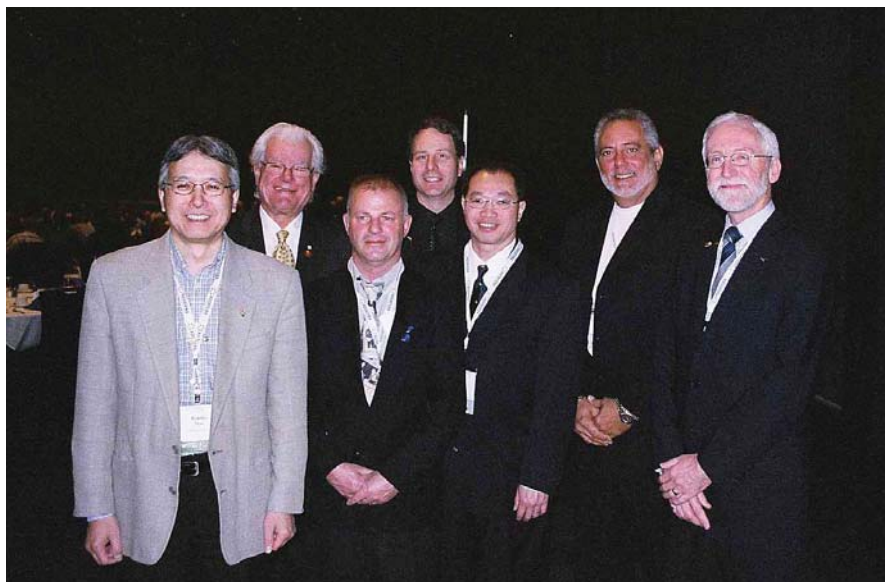
"One of the things I've learned is that water, and how much of it we have, and how we use it, aren't the simple matters that I once thought. In fact, they're very complicated and more important and more immediate than I once thought.

"Another thing I have learned in the past seven years as a Senator, is how much the Government of Canada used to pay attention to questions of our water supply – to measuring it, and to knowing how it worked – and how that attention has waned in the past couple of decades.

"You are the leaders in your communities on questions having to do with water; and you can help to change and to form public opinion and public pressure. I want to urge you to do that, even more often and more strongly than you already do. Why do I want to urge more efforts in the interests of water research? Because I have learned that politicians of all stripes are intensely sensitive to constituents' pressure.

"The Government of Canada, in cooperation with the provinces and universities and other agencies, used to pay a lot of attention, at least to surface water and some groundwaters. It used to provide reasonably good funding to help make sure that we had a pretty good handle, given the science of the time, on what was going on with water.

"For example, the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) used to carry out very valuable work on



(Left to right ) Gary Mak, WCWEA WEF Delegate, Senator Tommy Banks, Andy Bebbington, WCWWA Conference Chair, Chris Ward, WCWWA President 2006/2007, Don Poon, WCS AWWA Director, Luis Aguiar, AWWA Vice President, Rick Corbett, WEF Trustee.

water. If you ask prairie farmers for a list of federal government institutions for which they have a universally high regard, it's a list of one – and that one is the PFRA. It can be argued that their efforts in some cases and in some areas, saved prairie farming. But the PFRA has been downgraded. It no longer occupies the prominent position it once did, and that's a shame, and it has to be corrected.

**In Canada, domestic water consumption in residences supplied from municipal sources in 2004 was 329 litres per person per day.**

"How did this come about? Well, Canada was in trouble financially. The World Bank and the IMF were starting to tell us how to run the country. We had to go quickly from huge annual deficits to balanced budgets, to surpluses if we were lucky, and make a start on paying down the long-term debt. There's only one way to do that when you're in "the glue," you raise taxes and cut expendi-

tures. And that's what we did and it worked.

"However inconvenient and difficult it might be, we can live without oil; we can live without coal; we can live without wheat. But we cannot live – there cannot be life – without water. But the Government of Canada, whether it is Liberal or Conservative, can't tell us, because it doesn't know, how much we've got; how much the measurable flows of surface water are down, if they're down; where the water tables are in much of the country; where our aquifers are; how big are they; where they go; and whose jurisdiction are they in.

"In the 1970s and 1980s there were more than 2,500 stations in a federal-provincial-territorial network of monitoring stations across Canada, monitoring stream flow. There are now just over 1,500. We need to have more and better information so that we can address the exponential growth of demand for water, particularly in this part of Canada. We need to pay more attention to conservation of our most precious natural resource, more attention to the efficient use of it, more attention to

a more responsible use of it. We need to know the real costs of water; to make sure that consumers of water, industrial, agricultural, and domestic, pay something closer to the real cost of that water.

“In Canada, domestic water consumption in residences supplied from municipal sources in 2004 was 329 litres per person per day. Consumption in the prairie provinces was below that national average; it was 271 litres per person per day in Alberta; 303 in Saskatchewan, and 219 in Manitoba. But in British Columbia, where fewer than a third of residential clients had metered, pay-per-use water systems, (compared to between 88% and 98% in the Prairies) usage was above the national average, at 426 litres per person per day.

“There were five Recommendations that were made to the Government of Canada in the November 2005 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment, and Natural Resources. I was then the chair of the Committee and one of the authors of the report.

**Recommendation 1**

The Government of Canada should take the necessary steps to ensure that all of Canada’s major aquifers are mapped by 2010. This data should be made available in the national groundwater database and supported by a summary document assessing the risks to groundwater quality and quantity.

**Recommendation 2**

The Government of Canada should work with industry and with other orders of government to develop a standard methodology for the collection and reporting of water-related data. The Government of Canada should take on the responsibility for the creation of a centralized depository for water statistics.

**Recommendation 3**

The Government of Canada must restore funding for longitudinal water studies. Such studies are essential to ensuring the sustainability of Canada’s water resources.

**Recommendation 4**

The Government of Canada should bolster its support for the National Water Research Institute and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration so that these institutions can better address Western Canada’s growing water challenges.

**Recommendation 5**

The Government of Canada should create a National Water Council. This Council, composed of representatives from industry, research institutes and all orders of government, would be tasked with identifying the key water issues that require attention from the federal government and proposing strategies for addressing them.

“I believe that these are good recommendations, that they are prudent, and

that attention should be paid to them. I reiterate my plea – that you use every means at your disposal, including the leadership in this area that each of you have in your respective communities – to increase public awareness of the urgent necessity of attention to these questions and to bring pressure to bear on all orders of government.”

*Excerpted from Senator Banks’ speech at the 2007 WCW&WA Conference*



**C&M**  
Environmental Technologies Inc.

**Supplier of Water & Wastewater Treatment Equipment**

---



**Polychem** SYSTEMS  
DIVISION OF BRENTWOOD INDUSTRIES, INC.

Chain & Flight  
Sludge Collectors



**ENVIRONMENTAL DYNAMICS INC.**

Aeration Systems  
Disc & Tube Diffusers



**WESTECH**  
Engineering Inc.

Process Equipment  
Circular Clarifiers  
Screens, Digesters



**SPIRAC Inc.**

Spiral Conveyors  
Sludge Silos  
Live Bottom Bins



**SANITHERM ENGINEERING LIMITED**  
Established 1946

Package Plants  
Membrane Bioreactors



**ECOfluid**  
SYSTEMS INC

Upflow Sludge  
Blanket Filtration

**New Projects • Replacement Parts • Retrofits**

**Call: 1-800-570-8779**

C & M Environmental Technologies Inc., Barrie, Ontario  
Tel: 705.725.9377 • Fax: 705.725.8279 • Email: info@cmeti.com  
Website: www.cmeti.com