

Draft notes from September 14th 2001 meeting of Waterwatch Toronto Committee

Present: Mike Seaward, Brent Patterson, John Cartwright, Christine Elwell, Sarah Miller, Tim Maguire, Bill Guthrie, Gina Gignac, Frank Morrissey, Julius Deutsch, Helen Kennedy, Susan Lyons, Shelly Gordon, Shannon McKenna, Paul Kahnert.

Regrets: Shelly Petrie.

Meeting called to order by Mike Seaward.

Gina provided a historical overview of how CUPE Local 416 set up a process of working with community groups in 1998 to ensure that water would remain a public utility. As early as 1999, the City stated that water would remain in public hands there is clear indication that the City has other plans. The campaign to keep water public was disrupted by the strike situation in 1999. Bill talked about the Vector Poll which showed the majority of people in Toronto want to keep water public.

Tim mentioned that a Waste Water Caucus exists in CUPE Local 79 that monitors how the City is dealing with sewage. As well the process of privatizing the bill collection process has been a major concern for Local 79 since the 2002 budget process.

Frank discussed the lab work. Some of this work is currently contracted out. It is dependent on what is being sent for testing.

Mike asked the different organizations around the table to provide further update on what they have been doing on the water issue.

1) Brent reported on the success of local Waterwatch committees across Canada ie Vancouver and London

2) John reported on the Trades Council--they have along history of involvement in this issue because of the impact on their sector. Video was produced by the Trades on ecoli as well. Trades sent a letter to every Councillor indicating setting up a arms length public utility was wrong.

3) Christine talked about the impact of NAFTA. CIFELP has been studying the impact of climate changes on the Great Lakes and how water levels have dropped in 2 years.

4) Sarah reviewed the issues coming out of the Walkerton Investigation. CELA has been actively involved in these proceedings. Two views--government run versus public private partnerships. (PPP). AQUA could be the first step in the privatization process across Ontario.

5) Helen reported on how MNSJ has played a key role in the budget process and how the enviromental issues need to be examined in the context of the budget cycle at City Hall. As well Helen talked about the need to focus on the Feds and the prov on cost sharing arrangements pertaining to infrastructure

6) Shannon and Shelly reviewed some of the initiatives of CUPE OD in addressing this issue. PPP are a major concern for CUPE as well as how you define the concept of public utility and arms length organizations.

7) Paul talked about the Ontario electricity Commission being sent set by CUPE local 1 and the broader community allies on the marketing of hydro. There are many similarities to water.



Bill provided an overview of the political situation at City Hall. This issue will go to appropriate committee in October and will be before Council in November. The Commissioner has indicated that he will not support privatization of water; but the fear is that the establishment of an arms length water agency will lead to privatization. Already the large private sector companies such as United Water are lobbying to be the carrier/supplier for such an agency. This is a similar model to the battle between MTHC/THC and the new housing company TCHC where Greenwin Development want to be the main contractor for all social housing in Toronto

As a result of the discussion on the political situation at City Hall, Sarah proposed we develop a set of guiding principles. Gina felt we needed short and long term goals beyond November. Shelly stated we don't have much time and we need to respond. Already the private sector has been hosting conferences on the privatization of water. Sarah urged that we need to look at the dollars and cents (efficiencies) of why we need to keep it public (government run). She urged us to look at the York region experience. Frank agreed because water makes money for the City.

There was a general consensus that we need a 'go forward' strategy. Mike asked the group how do they want to proceed. Helen identified several strategies

- 1) sub group to develop principles to form (Brent, John and reps from 416 and 79)
- 2) time lines for the next 4 weeks (Julius and 416)
- 3) corporate research (Shelly)
- 4) public/private language and what do we mean by public utility(group)
- 5) contacting TEA and Davis Miller's office. (Julius)
- 6) contacting public health (Julius)

Next meeting Wednesday September 26th 1:00--3:00 pm at the Labour Council.

