



Common Front to Protect Water

Canadian social activists, trade unionists and environmental groups have formed a common front to protect water.

The initial participants in the common front are: the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Council of Canadians.

The common front is organizing a campaign with three major objectives:

- a.. Oppose Water Exports
- b.. Stop Privatization of Municipal Water Services
- c.. Promote water conservation, protection of water quality and healthy aquatic ecosystems

Our first target is to pressure the federal government to honour its promises to prohibit the bulk export of water. This needs to be realized through federal legislation banning large scale water exports (including water export by tanker) and by ensuring that trade and investment agreements (such as the NAFTA and the proposed MAI) do not threaten Canada's water.

We have adopted the following brief statement and set of principles:

Water is of immeasurable importance to Canada's environment, economy, public health and identity. Canada's rivers, lakes and groundwater have shaped our history, powered our industrial development, sustained our health, and nourished our spirits. Nevertheless, Canadians can no longer take water for granted. In addition to the many factors that threaten water quality and aquatic ecosystem health in Canada, we are in danger of losing public control of water resources and management. Increasingly, water is being regarded as a commodity that can be bought and sold on the market. There are now several active proposals to export Canadian water by bulk shipments or by diverting rivers. In addition, private corporations are gaining a foothold in the management of public water services such as drinking water and sewage treatment.

In light of these and other trends, we recognize the following principles:

- a.. Water is a public trust. All Canadians have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the major decisions affecting water in Canada.
- a.. An adequate supply of clean water for peoples' daily living needs is a basic human right. This right is best ensured by keeping water and sewage services in the public sector, by regulating the protection of water supplies and by promoting the efficient use of water.
- a.. It is wrong – environmentally, economically and morally – to engage in the large-scale trade of water. Water must not be regarded as a commodity for exchange in the international marketplace. Adequate supplies of clean water for people in water-scarce regions can only be ensured by promoting conservation and protection of local water resources. Importing water is not an economically or environmentally sustainable strategy for dealing with water scarcity.
- a.. Water is the lifeblood of the environment as well as an essential resource for humans. Each generation must ensure that the abundance and quality of water is not diminished as a result of its activities. Greater efforts must be made to restore the health of aquatic ecosystems that have already been degraded as well as to protect others from harm.