



They're coming to take our water...

**Please sign the enclosed petition
to save our precious lakes...**

April 15, 1999

Dear Concerned Friend,

There's nothing more important in the natural world than that miraculous liquid which makes all life possible - fresh water.

But right now Canada's water - our water - is under terrible threat.

In recent months a number of large corporations have attempted to extract enormous quantities of Canadian lake water and sell it abroad.

Last year, the Nova Group of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario applied for a permit to sell up to 10 million (10,000,000) litres of Lake Superior water each day to Asia. Under public pressure, Nova agreed to withdraw its application, but this country came within a whisker of selling as much as six hundred million (600,000,000) litres of our precious water each year.

But that's not all.

Just months after Nova made its application, another company - McCurdy Group of Newfoundland - sought permission to export a staggering 52 billion (52,000,000,000) litres of water a year from Newfoundland's pristine Gisborne Lake. (That's over 86 times as much water as the Lake Superior deal involved.)

And as I write you this letter, the Gisborne Lake plan is still awaiting approval. **Which means it could be signed - and the water shipped - at any moment...**

So I urgently need your assistance right now. Please take a moment to sign and send me the enclosed "Save our Water" Petition.

I'll take your petition - and those from thousands of other concerned Canadians - and present them en-masse to Trade Minister Sergio Marchi and

-please turn over-

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy, urging them to enact legislation prohibiting large-scale water exports from Canada.

And when you send your petition, please also enclose a contribution of \$35, \$50 or \$100 to The Council of Canadians to help us expand our Save our Water Campaign.

I'm tremendously concerned about bulk water exports for a number of reasons.

First, they can be terribly damaging environmentally: they can lead to destruction of animals' homes, accumulation of poisonous mercury in the water, and even changes in climate. (Yes, climate change. Because when you play with something as fundamental as water, you're starting to meddle with the very structure of nature.)

But there's more.

So far, Canada has not allowed these exports. But if we do allow them it will be impossible to stop them. (Yes, you read correctly: Impossible.)

You see, Canada is bound by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). And the NAFTA deal clearly says that once we start exporting water we cannot stop.

Furthermore, Canadian and American corporations will have the actual legal right to come in and buy as much of our lake water as they want - without restriction.

And if our government tries to pass a law prohibiting these exports, corporations can sue our government for lost business. (In fact, Sun Belt Water Inc. of California is currently suing Canada for \$220 million because the B.C. government banned water exports in the early 1990s.)

Is this an outrage? You bet it is. But with the help of concerned citizens such as yourself, we'll be fighting it every step of the way.

So please do take a moment to sign the enclosed petition and send a contribution of \$35, \$50 or \$100 to The Council of Canadians so we can save our precious lake water.

With your help, in the coming weeks and months we'll be:

1) Setting up local "Water Watch Committees" across Canada. Run by volunteer activists coast-to-coast, the Committees will vigilantly monitor Canada's lakes and rivers, immediately publicizing and protesting any threatened water exports. They'll also push for legislation prohibiting these exports and, as a double protection, they'll work to remove water from the NAFTA deal or kill NAFTA altogether.

2) Lobbying Ministers Marchi and Axworthy in Ottawa to develop a national policy that ensures control of our water remains in public - not corporate - hands. And we'll be working with like-minded organizations overseas to promote more efficient use and maintenance of water in Developing countries.

(People sometimes ask me, "Wouldn't exports of Canadian water help people in poor, drought-stricken nations?" Unfortunately the water exports contemplated by the big corporations have nothing to do with helping poor people; the water would only be sold to the affluent.)

3) Launching a cross-Canada "Save our Water" Petition Drive. We plan to approach hundreds of thousands of Canadians to sign our petition - just like we did in our successful campaign to protect pensions (when we collected over half-a-million signatures and played a key role in the government's decision to save Old Age Security.) We'll bring your signed petition and thousands of others to Parliament Hill - and make the politicians listen.

4) Running a National Media and Public Education Campaign to alert Canadians to the threats. The Council of Canadians has already held press conferences, spoken extensively to the media, and published newspaper articles describing the harmful effects of water exports. But unfortunately most Canadians still don't know the extent of the problem. With your assistance, we'll get the message out right across the country.

Founded in 1985 by a handful of idealistic citizens including Farley Mowat and Pierre Berton, The Council of Canadians is today Canada's pre-eminent public watchdog organization - with a membership of 100,000 individuals.

Headquartered in Ottawa and boasting some 50 local chapters across the country, The Council works tirelessly to protect our social programs, culture and the environment against government cutbacks and incursions by transnational corporations.

In the past 15 months alone, **The Council has scored four major victories which protect people like you and me:**

1) Blocked passage of the awful Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) (April, 1998). This Agreement would have paved the way for two-tier health care in Canada and left our culture at the mercy of U.S. mega-corporations.

2) Forced the government to withdraw its so-called "Seniors Benefit" (Summer, 1998). This program would have robbed seniors of millions of dollars in retirement income.

3) Successfully campaigned to stop the bank mergers. The mergers would have meant 40,000 Canadians losing their jobs, a huge increase in service fees and terrible new hardship for our small businesses. (December, 1998)

4) Successfully campaigned to block Bovine Growth Hormone (BGH). This product of the big drug companies - which may be linked to cancer - could've ended up in our children's milk. Thanks in part to The Council of Canadians, that won't happen. (January, 1999)

But now we face a new challenge: protecting our priceless lake water.

Given the extraordinary success we've had in the last year I'm quite optimistic that we can once again rally Canadians and bring the government to its senses.

But I don't want to mislead you. Protecting our water will not be easy. The big corporations see a phenomenally profitable market here and are exerting tremendous pressure on Ottawa to let them exploit it. (I don't need to remind you about the sorts of money and lobbying power these big corporations can muster. They're very substantial, to say the least.)

So if you and I are going to succeed in getting the government to prohibit water exports - and remember, Ottawa could bring in a prohibition tomorrow, if it wanted - we'll have to work together.

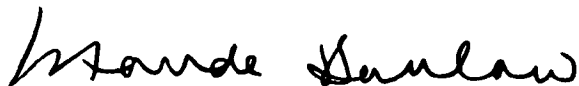
And there's no better way to do that than by supporting The Council of Canadians in our Save our Water Campaign.

Please take just a moment to sign the enclosed petition. It's the first step in this crucial campaign.

And please also take the second vital step and send The Council of Canadians a generous donation of \$35, \$50, \$100 or whatever you can afford so we can run the largest possible campaign to save our precious lake water - before it's taken away from us and sold to the highest bidder.

Thank you so much.

Yours,



Maude Barlow
Volunteer National Chairperson
The Council of Canadians

P.S. Our lake water is under terrible threat now. If even one province allows water exports, trade rules say every province must allow them - **with no limit on quantities**.

Please take a moment to sign and send me the enclosed "Save our Water" Petition. **And please also send a contribution of \$35, \$50 or \$100 to The Council of Canadians** so we can run a cross-country campaign to protect our precious lake water - while we still have time. Thank you. M.B.