

FIVE REASONS NOT TO COMMODIFY CANADIAN WATER

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has failed to clarify his government's position on bulk water exports, and the Conservative Party platform did nothing to address growing concerns about the stability and quality of Canada's water supply.

HERE ARE FIVE REASONS WHY CANADA SHOULD TURN OFF THE TAPS ON COMMODIFICATION AND BULK WATER EXPORTS:

1 The free market doesn't guarantee access to water. Treating water as a commodity will widen the gap between the "haves" and "have nots," opening the door to the pricing of water that will unfairly impact the poor. We should not build an economic barrier to clean water.

2 Bulk exports could open the floodgates to trade challenges. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) defines water as a "service" and an "investment," leaving Canadian water vulnerable to thirsty foreign investors. Once Canada allows water to be diverted outside our borders for large-scale industrial purposes, foreign investors must be given the same "national treatment" as Canadian companies.

3 Canada's water supply is limited. The perception that Canada has an unlimited supply of water is a myth and ignores the fact that more than one quarter of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years. One third of Canadians rely on groundwater for their daily needs, but we have no understanding of how long this supply will last. Only one per cent of the water in the Great Lakes is renewable and climate change poses a major threat to the lakes, causing longer drought periods and unstable precipitation.

4 Public water is safer, cleaner and more affordable. Allowing corporate interests to control public water resources will weaken the central role of the government as the guardian of our water supply. When for-profit companies control drinking water, public health and safety are compromised.

5 Water is essential for people and nature. There is no replacement for fresh water to meet the needs of human health and livelihoods. Water cannot be treated like oil, a tradable commodity. Life is possible without oil, but we cannot live without water.

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