

Water Issues Across Canada

A snapshot prepared by the Council of Canadians

World Water Day 2008

We are in the midst of a crucial political moment in the fight to protect Canada's water. All four major parties opposing the government are calling for a ban on bulk water exports and stronger environmental protections for the water in Canada's lakes, oceans and rivers. Even prominent Conservative politicians are admitting that Canada's water is under threat, due to trade agreements like NAFTA and the SPP. The question is, how much pressure will it take before the Harper government finally takes action?

Members of Parliament know that citizens are concerned about Canada's water. In 2004, an Ipsos Reid poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians found that 97 per cent of Canadians support the call for a National Water Policy. In 2005, the Prime Minister's Office received 120,000 letters, emails and phone calls on the subject of bulk water exports and water privatization – the largest volume of communications on any issue after same-sex marriage.

Here is a snapshot of the pressing issues affecting Canada's water in 2008:

Canada has not mapped its water supply.

Documents prepared by Natural Resources Canada and obtained under Access to Information prove that Canada's water supply is under threat from bulk water exports, climate change and high domestic use. The documents show that it would take 30 years to adequately map Canada's water supply. In August of 2007, the water levels in the Great Lakes reached historic lows.

Canada does not have a ban on bulk water exports. Despite the federal government's claims, Canada's so-called ban on bulk water exports is purely voluntary (and therefore virtually useless), because it can be broken at any time by any province. Meanwhile, the North American Free Trade Agreement

(NAFTA) recognizes water as a "good," a "service" and an "investment" – which means that once Canada begins exports of fresh water to the U.S., the tap can never be turned off. Eighty per cent of Canadians strongly oppose bulk water exports. Our government should listen.

The House of Commons agrees that NAFTA threatens water.

In June 2007, the Standing Committee on International Trade tabled a motion recommending that the federal government "begin talks with its American and Mexican counterparts to exclude water from the scope of NAFTA." It was supported by all parties except the Conservatives.

The SPP puts water on the table. The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) has opened the possibility of water being negotiated as part of trade agreements. In April 2007, business leaders from Canada, the U.S. and Mexico met behind closed doors as part of the North American Futures 2025 project, which featured talks of "water consumption, water transfers and artificial diversion of bulk water" with the goal of achieving "joint optimum utilization of the available water." This occurred within the context of the SPP, which seeks to harmonize environmental regulations across the three countries – without consulting Parliament or the public.

Even a prominent Conservative Senator agrees that Canada's water needs protection. Senator Pat Carney recently introduced a Senate bill that seeks to ban the commercial export of Canada's water through an amendment to the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act. Carney, the Mulroney trade minister who helped negotiate the 1988 Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and who denied that it and its successor NAFTA put Canada's water in jeopardy, now acknowledges that these deals do expose Canadian water to the risk of bulk export.

The Liberals are building a water platform. The Liberal Party is in the midst of crafting a policy that it says will beef up the government's management and protection of water. The party has also tabled a proposal for a new Water Stewardship Minister, who could help bring order to a maze of more than 20 departments that set federal policies affecting water.

The Bloc Québécois wants water excluded from NAFTA. Last spring, the Bloc introduced a motion to the Standing Committee on International Trade that recommended that the government quickly begin talks with its American and Mexican counterparts to exclude water from the scope of NAFTA. It passed in June 2007 with support from all of the parties except the Conservatives.

The NDP has introduced a motion on a national water policy. Toronto NDP MP Peggy Nash introduced a motion in March 2007 calling for a national water strategy including federal standards, a ban on bulk water exports and Canada's signature on a United Nations covenant declaring clean water a basic human right. She also wants to ensure water is excluded from any current and future trade agreements.

Water infrastructure is crumbling. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities reported at the end of 2007 that national infrastructure is "near collapse" and that a \$123 billion injection is needed immediately to address the crisis, including \$35 billion for water services alone. The Harper government responded by saying that it is not in the "pothole business," flippantly ignoring municipalities' desperate need for new resources.

The Conservatives are all about P3s. While the feds may not be in the pothole business, they sure are in the public-private partnership business. In November, the Conservatives unveiled a \$1.25 billion Public Private Partnerships Fund, which seeks to "support innovative projects that provide an alternative to *traditional government infrastructure procurement*" (emphasis ours) and "facilitate a broader use of P3s in Canadian infrastructure projects." All projects seeking \$50 million or more in federal contributions through the Border Crossings Fund and the Building Canada Fund will "be required to assess and consider the viability of a P3 option."

To learn more about the threats to Canada's water and the Council of Canadians' vision for a National Water Policy, visit www.canadians.org/water.

Canadian water infrastructure is crumbling, and more than 25% of municipalities have faced water shortages in recent years.



A Briefing Note prepared by the Council of Canadians

The Canadian government's current Federal Water Policy is over 20 years old. Without a comprehensive national water strategy, Canada's water is left vulnerable to contamination, shortages, and pressure to export water in bulk to the United States.

Founded in 1985, the Council of Canadians is Canada's largest citizens' organization, with members and chapters across the country. We work to protect Canadian independence by promoting progressive policies on fair trade, clean water, energy security, public health care, and other issues of social and economic concern to Canadians.

The Council of Canadians has been actively involved in national and international water issues since 1986. The national water campaign has two key objectives: to secure a national water policy and to assert water sovereignty in regard to transboundary water issues.

Shortages and crumbling infrastructure

More than 25 per cent of Canadian municipalities have faced water shortages in recent years and more than one third rely on groundwater. Natural Resources Canada keeps scant data on groundwater, and knows dangerously little about the sustainability of this supply.

Canadian municipalities issue hundreds of "boil water" advisories each year to protect residents from contaminated water, yet Canada still has no national clean drinking water standards.

Communities across the country desperately need money to pay for water pipes and filtration systems. But municipal governments are chronically under funded, and many are turning to private investors to rebuild infrastructure through public-private-partnerships. The federal government is supporting the use of P3s through

its \$1.25 billion Public Private Partnerships Fund, which seeks to "support innovative projects that provide an alternative to traditional government infrastructure procurement" and "facilitate a broader use of P3s in Canadian infrastructure projects."

Meanwhile, water companies are aggressively pursuing new "markets" on First Nations reservations, where generations of neglect from the Canadian government have left over 65 per cent of communities with unsafe water and unsuitable or non-existent sanitation services.

Council of Canadians members are well aware of the problems associated with P3s, including skyrocketing costs, diminished quality and unaccountable management. But the Conservative government is determined to push the P3 model at the expense of Canada's deteriorating water infrastructure.

Bulk Water Exports

Canada is under increasing pressure to export water in bulk through pipelines or tankers. Water exports would spell disaster for the environment and are the wrong prescription for water shortages in areas, such as the U.S. southwest, that have adopted unsustainable development and agricultural practices.

Despite some claims to the contrary, Canada's ban on bulk water exports is purely voluntary (and therefore virtually useless), because it could be broken by any province at any time. In recent

years, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland have all considered licensing schemes for bulk water exports.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) treats water as an investment and a commercial good. The investor rights, national treatment and proportionality clauses in NAFTA impinge upon Canada's sovereign right to steward its water resources in the public interest. Any legislation on water exports must address our trade obligations and the patchwork quilt of jurisdictional powers through a federal-provincial accord.

It is time for federal leadership to develop a National Water Policy that addresses the urgent need for infrastructure investment, provides national standards for drinking water quality and bans the export of water in bulk.

A National Water Policy must include the following elements:

- A ban on bulk water exports and comprehensive restrictions on new diversions. Bulk exports leave Canada's water vulnerable to environmental depletion and to international trade challenges.
- Binding national standards on drinking water quality. All Canadians deserve access to clean drinking water.
- A national investment strategy to enable municipalities and First Nations communities to upgrade desperately needed infrastructure. Public health and safety is best served by publicly owned and operated utilities that are accountable to the community.
- A commitment to ensure water does not become a tradable commodity in current and future trade deals. If Canada were to start selling water for commercial purposes, NAFTA would never allow us to turn off the tap.

To be effective, this policy must be developed among all of the different levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and aboriginal. A national water policy and action agenda could be framed in two tiers. The first would be the adoption of a common set of principles with the provinces. The principles could include that water is a human right, a public trust, a public service and a sovereign responsibility to protect. The second tier would be federal action in the areas over which the federal government has jurisdiction. This includes combating pollution, overseeing fisheries, and taking action to address conflicts related to transboundary waters and water on aboriginal lands.

It is a national shame that Canada has consistently opposed the right to water at the United Nations. Access to clean fresh water is a right and a requirement for leading a life in human dignity. Canada is the only one of 53 countries to have voted against formally recognizing this right and appointing a special rapporteur on water.

Water a priority

Water is clearly an important issue for all Canadians. In 2004, an Ipsos Reid poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians found that 97 per cent of Canadians support the call for a National Water Policy. In 2005, the Prime Minister's Office received 120,000 letters, emails and phone calls on the subject of bulk water exports and water privatization – the largest volume of communications on any issue after same-sex marriage.

The Council of Canadians is calling on the Canadian government to develop a National Water Policy that preserves the integrity of water as a shared public trust. A comprehensive environmental platform would be incomplete without protection measures of the highest calibre for Canada's fresh water. The Council of Canadians also calls on the federal government to champion the right to water at the United Nations and around the world.

We hope we can count on your support.

A National Disgrace:

Canada's shameful position on the right to water

The Canadian government has tarnished its reputation on the world stage by continuing to oppose attempts to enshrine the right to water at the United Nations.

At the World Water Forum at The Hague in 2000, in Kyoto in 2003, and in Mexico City in 2006, Canada refused to assert water as a human right. In 2002 and 2003, Canada was the only country to vote against resolutions on the human right to water, stating, "Canada does not accept that there is a right to drinking water and sanitation."¹

Pressure's on

Access to clean, fresh water is essential for people and nature, and the UN is starting to take note. In September 2007, at the 6th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Canadian Louise Arbour, presented her report outlining states' obligations under the right to water.

Madame Arbour's report called for stronger regulations governing water companies, including penalties for corporations that commit human rights abuses and restrict people's right to water.

In May 2006, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights rebuked Canada for its position on the right to water, saying it "regretted" Canada's continued opposition, and called on Canada to review its stand. The UK recently reversed its initial opposition to the right to water and is now a supporter. Canada is becoming increasingly isolated as state upon state recognizes the right to water.

The crisis

The global water crisis is already upon us. Over 1.1 billion people do not have access to safe, clean drinking water, while 2.6 billion are without adequate access to water for basic sanitation. This

¹ Canadian representative Marie Gervais-Vidricaire, Official Records of the Commission on Human Rights, 58th session, April 22, 2002.

crisis is not only due to water scarcity, but also because the international community has failed to adequately manage and provide water for all.

The solution

A binding convention on the right to water would outline the responsibility of international governments to provide safe drinking water for all citizens, regardless of the community or country they live in. Most importantly, water should be recognized as a fundamental right. This would ensure that access to safe water is not determined by one's ability to pay for it.

A UN convention on the right to water would establish clear reporting and redress mechanisms. It would also help put a stop to the rampant pollution, depletion and abuse of our water sources.

Guarantees

The global water crisis calls for good governance and for the political will to act. A UN Convention on the Right to Water could help guarantee that:

- Governments (not private companies) ensure affordable access to safe water for drinking, food preparation and sanitation.
- Water is protected as a public trust and delivered as a public service on a not-for-profit basis.
- Environmental protections are instituted, ensuring a safe water supply.
- Water sources are preserved and protected from overuse, pollution, and diversions.

It's not too late for the Canadian government to reverse its position on the right to water and instead, to become a champion for this fundamental right— the world is depending on it.

Canada's Water Under Pressure

Five reasons to oppose bulk water exports

The world is running out of clean water. The U.S. population is exploding, and the American southwest is mining water for industrial and agricultural purposes faster than nature can replenish it. Business leaders see diversions and wholesale bulk water exports as the solution to the global water crisis. However, these band-aid solutions do little more than worsen the situation while failing to address the real management and rights issues at the core of the water struggle.

Here are five reasons to oppose bulk water exports:

1. **Canada does not have a surplus of water.**

Contrary to popular belief, Canada holds 6.5 per cent of the world's renewable water (compared to the incorrect figure of 20 per cent being touted by corporate leaders). More than one quarter of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years, and only 1 per cent of water in the Great Lakes is renewable.

2. Once it's gone, it's gone. Water is a finite resource. Bulk water exports permanently remove water from the ecosystem at a time when climate change is already drying up traditional surface water sources like the Great Lakes.

3. Trade agreements could open the floodgates. 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.

4. Canada has no ban on bulk exports. There is a voluntary provincial ban on bulk exports, but any province could break it any time, and it would not withstand a NAFTA challenge. In recent years, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland have all considered licensing schemes for bulk water exports.

5. **The Security and Prosperity Partnership means water is on the table.**

The SPP was agreed to in 2005 by the leaders of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico with no debate by Parliament or the public. In March 2006, a major Washington-based think tank funded by the U.S. government launched the North American Future 2025 Project, "to help guide the ongoing Security and Prosperity Partnership," according to the *Ottawa Citizen*. Leaked documents obtained by the Council of Canadians indicate that bulk water exports have been a subject of discussion among corporate leaders at the Project's behind-closed door meetings.

Water is not a commodity to be bought and sold. Bulk water exports will not address the issues of water scarcity, urban sprawl and wastage. Allowing water to be traded as an export would create a market system that would determine access to water by ability to pay.

Water exports could spell disaster for the environment and for human rights. Displacing water from one place to another spreads desertification. In this age of global warming, we need to address drought through sustainable conservation strategies administered by the public sector.

Canada needs an effective National Water Policy that bans the export of water, implements strict restrictions on water diversions, and recognizes a strong federal role in the protection of this valuable resource.

The water justice movement in Canada

A coalition of key Canadian organizations are joining forces this World Water Day to bring a message of water justice to the Canadian public. The Council of Canadians, CUPE, Oxfam and the Polaris Institute all campaign on water issues, but have different approaches and focus on different projects. These groups are coming together to promote the theme of this year's World Water Day: Water for people, not for profit.

The Council of Canadians

The Council of Canadians is Canada's largest citizens' organization, with members and chapters across the country. The organization works to protect Canadian independence by promoting progressive policies on fair trade, clean water, energy security, public health care, and other issues of social and economic concern to Canadians.

The Council works on water issues from both a national and international perspective. The national water campaign's goal is to convince the Canadian government to enact a National Water Policy that would include a ban on bulk water exports, national standards on drinking water quality, a national investment strategy to upgrade water infrastructure in First Nations communities, the exclusion of water from all trade agreements, and the recognition of water as a fundamental human right and a shared public resource.

For more information visit www.canadians.org/water.

CUPE

The 570,000 members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees deliver public services in communities across the country, including water services. For more than a decade, CUPE has worked with coalition partners at the grassroots level to successfully defend public ownership and

control of water and wastewater systems, and to protect public water supplies. CUPE is a strong advocate for increased federal and provincial funding to municipalities so that cities and towns can upgrade and expand water systems without being forced to privatize through "public-private-partnerships," or P3s. Through its international work, CUPE promotes water as a public service and a human right for everyone on the planet.

For more information visit www.cupe.ca/water.

Oxfam

Oxfam campaigns on the idea that water is life. The organization raises concern that more than 1 billion people are forced to drink contaminated water, half of the hospital beds in developing countries are occupied by people suffering from sanitation and water-related diseases, and 4,000 children die each day from diarrhea caused by drinking contaminated water. Oxfam recognizes that safe water is essential to a healthy and productive life.

Oxfam is working to have Canada officially recognize water is a human right. The organization says that safe water and sanitation are key to improving girls' access to education, promoting gender equality, and reducing child mortality.

For more information visit www.oxfam.ca.

Polaris Institute

The Polaris Institute is continuing its work to challenge the bottled water and water privatization industry as part of a global water justice movement supporting water as a public commons – both as a fundamental human right and an ecological trust. As part of World Water Day activities, Polaris will be releasing a report on bulk water exports called *Turning on Canada's Tap*, and kick-starting a bottled water-free zones campaign that challenges the corporate control

of water one space at a time. Visit www.insidethebottle.org to find out how to create a 'zone' in your classroom, union local, community centre and beyond.

For more information visit
www.polarisinstitute.org/water.

The water justice movement around the world

The **Blue Planet Project (BPP)** is the international component of the Council of Canadians' water campaign. The project works to protect the world's fresh water from the growing threats of commodification and privatization. It promotes public, efficient, community-controlled water systems that are accountable to citizens and ensure the rights of future generations within a sustainable ecosystem. The BPP works with organizations and activists in both northern and southern countries, and is affiliated with many international networks.

RED VIDA

In English, RED VIDA translates as Inter-American Vigilance for the Defence and the Right to Water. Formed in El Salvador in August 2003, Red VIDA seeks to strengthen civil society groups by coordinating activities and sharing information on the struggle for the right to water. RED VIDA played a prominent role in launching the Peoples' World Water Movement, which took place at a summit in New Delhi on the eve of the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai, India.

African Water Network

On January 24, 2007, representatives from civil society groups and social movements launched a new African Water Network to counter the misguided push for water privatization around the world. More than 250 activists representing African organizations and social movements from over 40 African countries committed to supporting this network during an historic session at the 7th World Social Forum in Nairobi. The network fights against water privatization, campaigns for public control and management of water resources, opposes all forms of prepaid water meters, and fights to have water enshrined

in African countries' national constitutions as a human right.

The World Water Contract Network

This international committee was formed in Lisbon in 1998, and is made up of international organizations, academics and individuals who are working to spread and raise awareness about new sources of water pollution, push for improvements to irrigation systems and industrial agriculture, promote a 10-to-15-year moratorium on the construction of large dams, and establish a World Water Watch dedicated to securing the human right to water.

For more information on the international movement to secure the right to water, visit
www.blueplanetproject.net and
www.righttowater.ca.

A fierce resistance to the corporate takeover of water has grown in every corner of the globe, giving rise to a coordinated and successful water justice movement.



Make a splash on World Water Day!

March 22 is World Water Day, and to mark this day, the Council of Canadians, CUPE, Oxfam Canada, the Polaris Institute, Eau Secours and other organizations across the country will take part in a national day of action to promote water as a public good – not a source of profit.

This is an excellent opportunity for water activists across the country to raise awareness of water issues, hold events and send a strong message to the federal government that it is time to protect Canada's water.

Last year, the Council of Canadians paid federal Environment Minister John Baird a visit, delivering 45,000 petitions from Canadians demanding federal action on water. We haven't heard back from him yet, have you?

There are many things that you can do to mark World Water Day in your community. Here are some ideas:

- 1. Lobby your elected representatives.** Your federal Member of Parliament will be in their constituency office during the weeks of March 17- 28. Meet with your representative and share the Council of Canadians' call for a National Water Policy featured in the Briefing Note that is in this kit. Visit www.canadians.org for resources and talking points to bring with you.
- 2. Organize a film screening.** *Dead in the Water* is a National Film Board documentary that investigates the results of the privatization of water services around the world. CUPE and the Council of Canadians have purchased multiple copies and have developed a discussion guide to help organize public screenings, house parties or community events. The discussion guide and fact sheets are available on our website and you can contact your Regional Office to find a copy of *Dead in the Water* to borrow. It should also be available in your local library.
- 3. Make a splash in the media** with the tools contained in this kit, including a template public service announcement and media advisory. Our media officer, Meera Karunanathan, will have an op-ed emphasizing the need for Canada to take action on the water crisis at home and abroad available for you to adapt and submit for publication in your local paper.

As well, we encourage you to **work with teachers**. The Council has developed several water themed lesson plans designed for primary and secondary students. Visit our website at www.canadians.org to download these teaching modules, and meet with local teachers to encourage them to use them in their classrooms.

There are also creative ways that you can use Maude Barlow's latest book *Blue Covenant*. Donate a copy to a local library or school, offer a copy as a prize at public events, or give it to your Member of Parliament. We have a limited supply of books in the national office for chapters to use. To receive your copy of *Blue Covenant*, please contact Jeannette by phone at 1-800-387-7177 ext. 229 or by e-mail at jmuhongayire@canadians.org.

Keep us in the loop

Let the Council know what kind of event you are planning so we can share success stories with other chapters across the country. We will post a list of events on our website to help with promotions. Don't forget to take pictures of your event and send them to us. Most important of all, have fun!

For further assistance, contact the regional office closest to you:

British Columbia-Yukon: 1-604-688-8846, (toll free) 1-888-566-3888

Prairies: 1-780-429-4500, (toll free) 1-877-729-4500

Ontario-Quebec: 1-416-979-5554, (toll free) 1-800-208-7156

Atlantic: 1-902-422-7811



Tips on meeting with your Member of Parliament

Your Member of Parliament is your main access point to the Canadian government. But many MPs are unaware of the issues that the Council of Canadians campaigns on, specifically the need for a National Water Policy.

There are many ways to reach your MP, including writing letters and delivering petitions, but this resource is designed specifically to help you meet face-to-face with your MP. Paying your MP a visit in honour of World Water Day, is an excellent way to get the Council's message across about the need to protect Canada's water.

Here are a few things you can do to make your meeting with your MP more successful.

What to do before the meeting:

- When you are booking the appointment, state that the purpose of the visit is to discuss water issues in Canada in conjunction with World Water Day.
- Take some time before the meeting to decide what specific questions or comments you would like to put forward. Streamline your arguments to two or three key points. Please read the Briefing Note included in this package, for some examples of key arguments you could put forward.
- Bring one or two other people with you to the meeting, preferably representatives from different sectors (such as environmental organizations or social justice groups). This will give your arguments more weight.
- Try and find out what your MP's position is on a particular issue. Also look to see what policies or regulations already exist on the subject. If you can't find that out beforehand, then ask when you get there. Please see the Water Issues Across Canada fact sheet included in this kit, to read more about the federal political parties' positions on water.

- Bring resources such as relevant new articles, the Council of Canadians' ACT for Canada's Water brochure or other fact sheets. Visit our website at www.canadians.org/water, to find more background information to take with you.

What to do at the meeting:

- Ask your MP to do something specific, such as taking your concerns to the House of Commons, cabinet or caucus.
- Try to keep detailed notes during the meeting. This will be very useful for follow-up discussions. Try to record the specific wording that your MP uses, and keep this as a reference. This is the best way to keep your MP accountable to what he or she says in the meeting.

What to do after the meeting:

- Follow up with a letter thanking your MP for the visit and asking for an update on their position on a National Water Policy.
- For more in depth advice, see *Communicating with your MP: A how to kit for the voluntary sector*, a report prepared by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable: http://www.acp-cpa.ca/en/lobby_guide.pdf.

For more information on what you can do to protect Canada's water and demand a National Water Policy, visit www.canadians.org/water.

Getting your message to the media on World Water Day

Obtaining local media coverage for your event on World Water Day is a great way to bring more attention to Canada's water issues. Below, you will find tips and media samples that you can use to help promote your World Water Day action. Staff in the Council of Canadians' national office will also be working on a national media strategy.

Definitions and deadlines

A public service announcement (PSA) is distributed to media outlets for use in promoting your event to the public.

- Identify the media that run PSAs and check their deadlines – magazines or bi-weeklies may have deadlines as many as two or three weeks before the event. For radio or TV, it may only be 2-3 days before the event.

A media advisory is intended to get media out to your event (press conference, rally, public forum, etc).

- Send the media advisory the week prior to the event. If it is on the weekend, send the advisory on Wednesday. If it's a weeknight event, send the advisory two to three days beforehand.

A press release is intended to give reporters the information they need to write a story (and ideally call you for further information).

- Send press releases the day of the event. Your aim is to gain attention, and to give the media an idea of what is newsworthy about your story.

Please note that we will also provide a template op-ed for chapters interested in using this tool. More details to follow.

[SAMPLE] PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

run until [fill in day of event here]

Citizens' groups to celebrate World Water Day

Are you concerned about the increasing pressure to export Canadian water to the United States? Are you concerned about water privatization, the quality of drinking water or the pollution of lakes and rivers in Canada?

Find out how you can get involved in promoting a national water policy to help address these issues.

The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians will be hosting a public forum/rally/event on [date] to help inform people about Canada's water issues and the need for a national water policy. The event starts at [time], at the [venue]. Admission is free.

For more information contact [name] at [phone number].

Tips for public service announcements

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are a way to get your message out on radio or television. Most local electronic media outlets have a community calendar or designated time for event announcements. They can be helpful for getting people out to your event, but there is no guarantee they will be used, so don't rely on them entirely. They are only one of your outreach and publicity tools. PSAs should be written in a way that you would imagine them read live on-air — they are a script rather than a press release. Make sure to include the "who, what, where, when and how as well as contact information that you're willing to have broadcast.

[SAMPLE] MEDIA ADVISORY - [Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizens' group to host World Water Day event

The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians is holding a rally/public forum/film screening to raise awareness about the need for a national water policy.

WHO: The [your city] chapter of the Council of Canadians

[include short bios of speakers if applicable]

WHAT: A public forum/rally/march that engages local residents on water issues.

WHEN: [date and time of event]

WHERE: [venue]

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For more information, or to arrange an interview in advance, contact [your contact info].

Tips for media advisories

If you choose to open your event to the media, you could send a media advisory. Use your judgment as to when or whether to send this out. It could be as early as two or three weeks before your event, or as late as a few days before your event, depending on the nature of the media outlets you send it to (weekly publications need more lead-time, for example). In any case, the follow-up calls are crucial to getting journalists' attention. Make sure your contact is available when reporters call or, if you do miss a call, return any messages from journalists as promptly as possible.

[SAMPLE] PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

The Council of Canadians makes a splash on World Water Day

[your community]- The [your city] chapter of The Council of Canadians is inviting residents to soak up some information on local water issues at a rally/public forum/film night on [date].

"World Water Day is an important day to remind people about the importance of water and the need for access to safe, clean, publicly-provided water," said Jane Activist, a long-time resident of [your community]. "There is increasing pressure on Canada to export water to the United States under the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America - an agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico that would give corporations from all three countries greater access to natural resources throughout the continent."

The event will raise awareness on the need for a National Water Policy that would place the public interest and the environment above corporate interests.

The public is invited to participate. Admission is free.

There will be a photo opportunity at [time]. Describe photo op.

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For more information contact [name] and [phone number].

Tips for press releases

Keep in mind when you write your release what makes a story newsworthy: dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins and major events, to name a few. In terms of timing, think about what your goal is. If the goal is to get people out to your event, you should send your press release at least one week in advance. This will give reporters time to do an advance story. If it is to raise awareness about the issue, a couple of days in advance should be sufficient.

Follow-up calls to reporters, or “pitching” can help you get in the news. Reporters receive dozens of press releases a day, and your call can help make your event stand out from the pack. It’s not always easy, though. Take some time before you call to formulate your thoughts.

These tips will help you get your message across:

- **Target your reporter.** Your best bet is to call reporters you know, or have worked with in the past. If they can’t cover the story, they’ll likely refer you to someone else.
- **Be timely.** Do not call reporters when you know they are on deadline. Mid-morning and early afternoon are good times to make pitches. If they sound rushed, offer to call back later. If you get the answering machine, leave the basics and call back at a better time.
- **Hooks galore.** What makes a story newsworthy? Again, it’s dramatic human interest, controversy, local angles, calendar tie-ins and major events. Be sure to let the reporter know if there is a photo opportunity at the event – they may be interested in coming out for this.