

Water Watch Statement 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, and are integral to our lives, nature and ecosystems.

Nevertheless, people living in Canada 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. Private corporations are gaining a foothold in the management of public water services such as drinking water and sewage treatment. There are also several active proposals to export Canadian water by bulk shipments or by diverting rivers. In addition, Canada is a net exporter of bottled water, draining our aquifers and selling ancient glacier water around the world for the profit of a handful of multinational corporations.

In light of these threats, we recognize the following principles:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Water is a public trust. All people living in Canada have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the major decisions affecting water in Canada.