

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

February 10, 2006

Dear Prime Minister Stephen Harper:

The purpose of this letter is to urge you, the 22nd Prime Minister of Canada, to support water as a human right and to clearly state that under your government Canada will be a defender of water as a fundamental human right and public trust.

In 2002 and again in 2003, at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Canadian government was alone in voting against recognizing water as a human right. Canadian representatives opposed the appointment of a special rapporteur dedicated to investigating questions pertaining to the right to water. Fortunately, the other countries of the commission passed the resolution and it was adopted.

We, the undersigned organizations, call on you and the new government to publicly renounce the previous position taken by the government and respect the wishes of Canadians. A 2004 Ipsos-Reid poll demonstrated that 97% of Canadians surveyed believe “Canada should adopt a comprehensive national water policy that recognizes clean drinking water as a basic human right”. We are calling on you to declare your support for water as a human right and public trust and enshrine this in a comprehensive national water policy.

Last year, the global community embarked on an important United Nations-led project called the *Water for Life* decade (2005-2015). As we enter into the second year of this campaign, and the first sitting of a new minority parliament, it is timely for you to express support for the right to water and to highlight Canada as a global leader in respecting human rights. The global community has also embraced the Millennium Development Goals, which mandate a halving of the proportion of the world’s population without access to clean water and sanitation by 2015. The UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights has clearly stated that water is a human right in its General Comment 15, and Canada, as a signatory to the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, is morally bound by this interpretation. It is time Canada joined efforts to secure the right to water and stop the needless death and disease caused by inadequate access to water and violations of fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, given the upcoming 4th World Water Forum in Mexico City this spring, we firmly ask that Canada, through our role in drafting the ministerial declaration for this event and participation in this Forum, oppose the further privatization and commodification of water.

Given Canada’s questionable record on promoting the human right to water, we wish to communicate to you, Prime Minister Harper, your responsibility to act in the interest of Canadians who have spoken out for the human right to water. As part of a broad coalition of national and international organizations monitoring these issues, we look forward to your response.

Sincerely, the undersigned organizations,

l'Association québécoise pour un contrat mondial de l'eau
Blue Planet Project
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Council of Canadians
Development and Peace
Eau Secours
Friends of the Earth Canada

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Polaris Institute

Please direct your reply to Anil Naidoo, The Blue Planet Project:
700 – 170 Laurier Street West, Ottawa On, K1P 5V5

copied to the other party leaders in the House of Commons

Honourable Jack Layton, NDP Party Leader
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