

## Resist water commercialization

Access to clean, affordable water is a basic human right. In Canada we need to protect water sources, public jobs and services. We also need to guard our right to clean water and promote the idea of water as a precious public resource.

We need to understand how water is being commercialized and privatized. The threats to public water and to community water sources include bulk water exports, water bottlers, environmental destruction, trade deals and contracting out.

### **Public employees must defend public water**

Sources of clean water are becoming scarcer. The amount of water North Americans use daily has many people worried about future water shortages.

Companies see water as a product that can be bought and sold. Their vision involves taking over public water systems and turning them into private, for-profit ventures.

In recent years, too many people in towns and cities across Canada have had to boil their water before drinking it. Some First Nations communities have had to move to avoid diseases caused by unclean water.

The need to upgrade our public water facilities and services is urgent, and public workers are the people to do it.

### **Why are water services ripe for privatization?**

- Canada's water and wastewater infrastructure will need tens of billions of dollars of investment over the next 15 years. Maintenance of water systems has been put on hold – but it cannot be ignored forever.
- Federal and provincial governments have failed to do their share. They have forced cities and towns to cut budgets, making them vulnerable to privatization.
- Global water corporations are eager to find ways to profit from this situation. They come to town offering to finance and operate water services and facilities through public private partnerships (P3s).
- Evidence from Canada, the United States, France and other countries shows that once water and wastewater privatization takes hold, public accountability and openness are lost, water rates increase, corporate rights take over from community rights and international trade agreements favour corporate exploitation.

## What is the big picture?

- Our water is governed by a patchwork of provincial rules that don't guarantee all Canadians access to high-quality water. The federal government needs to set and enforce national water standards.
- The federal government must start a low-interest loan program for water and wastewater infrastructure. Without federal support, municipalities are open to exploitation by corporations whose business is to control and exhaust water systems.
- A clear federal water policy must be created to protect and conserve our precious water from being exported to the U.S. The federal government needs to immediately ban water exports.
- Funds are urgently needed to help First Nations communities develop and improve their water and wastewater systems and to train local water operators.
- Towns and cities must pass sewer bylaws to restrict the disposal of toxins in wastewater systems. Strong anti-pesticide laws are needed to prevent groundwater contamination.
- Water and wastewater services and infrastructure must be publicly financed, managed, and delivered.

- Public water utilities must be managed to respect the rights of water workers and the interests of citizens. Citizens must be able to debate the issues, have access to politicians and have the right to appeal decisions on water prices, water quality, water conservation and upgrading of water infrastructure.
- Canada's municipalities must ensure water rates do not become too costly for the poor. Water must be affordable and accessible to all citizens.

Visit [www.cupe.ca/worldwaterday/](http://www.cupe.ca/worldwaterday/) for more info and resources.

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