



Let's work together
to keep water public.

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Fact Sheet

Lack of funding for new federal wastewater regulations threatens public water services

Issue

The federal government has released a new set of regulations called the Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations. The rules set new standards in communities across Canada to protect our water sources from wastewater effluent. We must keep the water that flows from our toilets and sewers into our rivers, lakes and oceans clean; especially when this is the same water that we drink.

The regulations require most wastewater facilities to be operating at a minimum secondary level of wastewater treatment and will require changes to current monitoring and reporting systems. This could affect nearly 1,000 facilities and many jobs.

Concerns

The federal government has no plans to fund water upgrades

If these regulations are not properly implemented our communities will be at risk. It could cost more than **\$20 billion** to upgrade and build new facilities to meet these regulations. Our cities are already experiencing an "infrastructure crisis" or a deficit of more than \$123 billion dollars. So far, the federal government has no realistic plan to cover these costs.

If the costs and responsibility of upgrading our deteriorating water facilities is offloaded onto municipalities, it could lead to increased user fees, contracting-out and privatization.

These regulations will legally require our cities to invest in wastewater facilities despite other pressing needs in the community and regardless of their economic situation. Currently 76 per cent of our water facilities are run by municipalities who are underfunded. Small communities will have an even harder time absorbing new costs.

Underfunding leads to privatization of our public services

Let's keep community assets like water and sewage systems in public hands. The public sector delivers quality affordable services that meet safety and environmental standards to communities. If there is no money to implement new rules, some communities will turn to corporations to meet the need. Private delivery leads to higher water rates and reduced service.

Multinational corporations are always searching for profit and new markets – and they've got our government on their side. The federal

government already pushes for private investment in water through a crown corporation called PPP Canada Inc., which requires communities to have a private sector partner in order to be eligible for federal funding. Water and wastewater facilities are on the list of projects to fund.

To make matters worse, Canada is currently negotiating a trade deal with Europe called the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) that will give European water companies a legal right to our municipal drinking water and sanitation systems.

Excuses, excuses: employers may use new rules to contract-out

Most of the men and women, who operate, maintain and deliver municipal water and wastewater services in Canada are members of CUPE.

Water operators currently working in facilities where the level of treatment is below a secondary level may require training and re-certification. Not a single mention of support for training and re-certification can be found in any the government documents to date.

New requirements involving effluent monitoring, record keeping and reporting; maintaining and calibrating new monitoring equipment; preparation of response and transition plans and meeting higher treatment levels depend on the availability of properly trained water operators.

There is a danger that employers will increasingly contract-out these services by arguing that there is a lack of qualified personnel to implement new rules. Smaller communities are particularly vulnerable and face unique barriers recruiting and retaining qualified wastewater operators. This was the case in Sackville, New Brunswick in 2007 following the implementation of new provincial staffing requirements.

Inadequate public funding must not be used as justification for contracting-out services. Our public wastewater operators are the backbone of these facilities and Canada's wastewater experts. They are the key to the successful implementation of new rules.

What can I do?

Help keep our water and wastewater systems public:

- Make funding for wastewater facilities and water operator training an election issue in 2010 and 2011.
- Join or initiate a Water Watch Committee in your community.
- Negotiate language in your collective agreement that includes: notice, disclosure and consultation and protection against contracting out. Propose language that obligates the employer to cover the cost of operator certification, training and re-training.
- Oppose new trade deals like CETA.

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