

# Burnaby, B.C., Becomes Canada's First Blue Community



**The Council of Canadians and CUPE were on hand to help celebrate as Burnaby, British Columbia, became Canada's first Blue Community on the eve of World Water Day.**

**(Left-right) Council of Canadians chapter activist Elsie Dean, Burnaby Mayor Derrick Corrigan, chapter activist Elizabeth Briemberg, and CUPE-BC researcher Robin Roff pose for a picture with the certificate that proclaims Burnaby's title as Canada's first "Blue Community."**

Launched in 2009, the Blue Communities Project is a joint national effort between the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, as well as Eau Secours in Québec. It is based on the premise that water is a "commons" or public resource that should be managed and distributed according to environmental and social justice principles.

Municipalities are on the frontlines of the Canadian water crisis. They are responsible for the treatment and distribution of water at a time of increased water shortages and water contamination. They must maintain extremely high drinking water standards even though the federal government fails to provide adequate funding for much-needed infrastructure upgrades and maintenance. Municipalities currently face a \$31 billion deficit

in water infrastructure funding, and one-quarter of our municipalities have faced water shortages in recent years.

The Blue Communities Project is about giving municipalities and community activists the tools and resources to protect water resources and promote publicly owned and operated water services by adopting a water commons framework.

A municipality can become a Blue Community by recognizing water as a human right, promoting publicly financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services, and banning the sale of bottled water in public facilities and at municipal events. Burnaby, located just east of Vancouver in British Columbia, has now adopted municipal resolutions confirming these principles.

"This is a real victory for water in Burnaby, and is a result of many dedicated people getting organized for water justice in their community," said Harjap Grewal, B.C.-Yukon Regional Organizer for the Council of Canadians.

The certificate presented to the City of Burnaby, signed by Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow and CUPE President Paul Moist, notes that a Blue Community "is one that treats water as belonging to no one, and the responsibility of all. Because water is central to human activity, it must be governed by principles that allow for reasonable use, equal distribution and responsible treatment in order to preserve water for nature and future generations."

Congratulations to local chapter activists and to Burnaby, B.C. residents for this important recognition!