

## **The Blue Summit declaration**

### **November 29, 2009 – Ottawa**

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Water is essential to life. It is part of the global commons, and belongs to the earth and all its species. It is sacred and needs to be treated with respect.

Governments must manage water resources on our behalf as a public trust. They must ensure water is distributed fairly and responsibly.

Far from having abundant water supplies, Canada is facing freshwater shortages. Shrinking supplies of clean water around the world endanger human populations and the health of ecosystems.

Water resources and services must not be bought, sold or traded. Water is a public resource, not an economic commodity. The environment and the public interest must not be sacrificed for private profits.

All people have the right to access water for basic needs. To ensure this right for all, water and sanitation services built by generations of Canadians must remain publicly owned, operated and delivered. The right to water must be recognized by the Canadian government, all other national governments, and the United Nations General Assembly.

First Nations communities in Canada are hardest hit by environmental destruction and inadequate water and sanitation services. Women are often most affected by lack of clean water and sanitation services. Water justice must be ensured for all peoples of Canada – and the world.

We are already seeing the impacts of climate change on water. Governments must take real and measureable steps to cut greenhouse gas emissions and protect fresh water.

Canada needs a national water policy that:

- recognizes water as a human right and a public trust;
- safeguards water resources from industrial abuse;
- guarantees adequate funding for water services, for watershed planning and management and for the science needed to protect water quantity and quality;
- commits to ensuring adequate water and sanitation services for First Nations communities.

This declaration is an urgent call to action.

We call on federal, provincial and municipal governments to take concrete action for:

### **Water justice**

- Recognize that water is vital to all of nature.
- Recognize water as a human right in domestic and international law .
- Endorse and ratify the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Recognize the water rights and responsibilities of Indigenous communities, and work with First Nations to end the on-reserve water and sanitation crisis.
- Protect surface and ground water from industrial exploitation by declaring it a public trust.
- Use “public-public partnerships” to share resources and knowledge with First Nations and other communities working to improve their water services.
- Meet Canada’s international obligations to help halve the number of people without access to clean drinking water and sanitation services by 2015.

### **Water security**

- Ensure public ownership, operation and delivery of water and sanitation services through a federal water infrastructure fund.
- Enforce pan-Canadian drinking water standards, with dedicated funds to train water workers.
- Improve drinking water quality in Indigenous communities through water quality standards set by Indigenous peoples.
- Implement a comprehensive strategy on water misuse and pollution that:
  - takes a precautionary approach to chemicals and other pollutants;
  - sets standards for industry and agribusiness;
  - eliminates the threats to water from tar sands production;
  - protects lakes from being used as mining dump sites;
  - establishes enforceable sewage treatment standards and publicly funds necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- Recognize and address the impact of climate change on water.
- Take immediate action on the climate crisis, improve Canada’s water monitoring programs, and plan for coming droughts and floods.

- Fund green infrastructure and retrofits for public buildings and water and sewage treatment systems, to improve water quality, access in the form of drinking fountains, and to conserve water and create good green jobs in the public sector.
- Develop publicly-owned and operated alternative power generation that safeguards water resources.
- Control the bottled water industry strictly by requiring mandatory labeling full disclosure of sources and testing standards, restricting water-taking permits.
- Phase out the sale of bottled water in public buildings, and promote tap water by improving access in public spaces.

### **Water democracy**

- Protect water from global market exploitation by excluding it from NAFTA and all future international trade agreements.
- Ban bulk water exports and interbasin water transfers.
- Ensure open, transparent and participatory management and delivery of public water services and resources.

### **Water knowledge**

- Invest in public research capacity to monitor water quantity and quality.
- Conduct comprehensive independent study of the tar sands' impact on water quality.
- Incorporate traditional knowledge in developing water policy at all levels of government.

This declaration builds on the 1999 Water Watch summit declaration, and is made in solidarity with the Indigenous water declaration and the Caracas water declaration.

We resolve today to engage all Canadians in working to protect water for the planet and future generations. Public water is a human right!