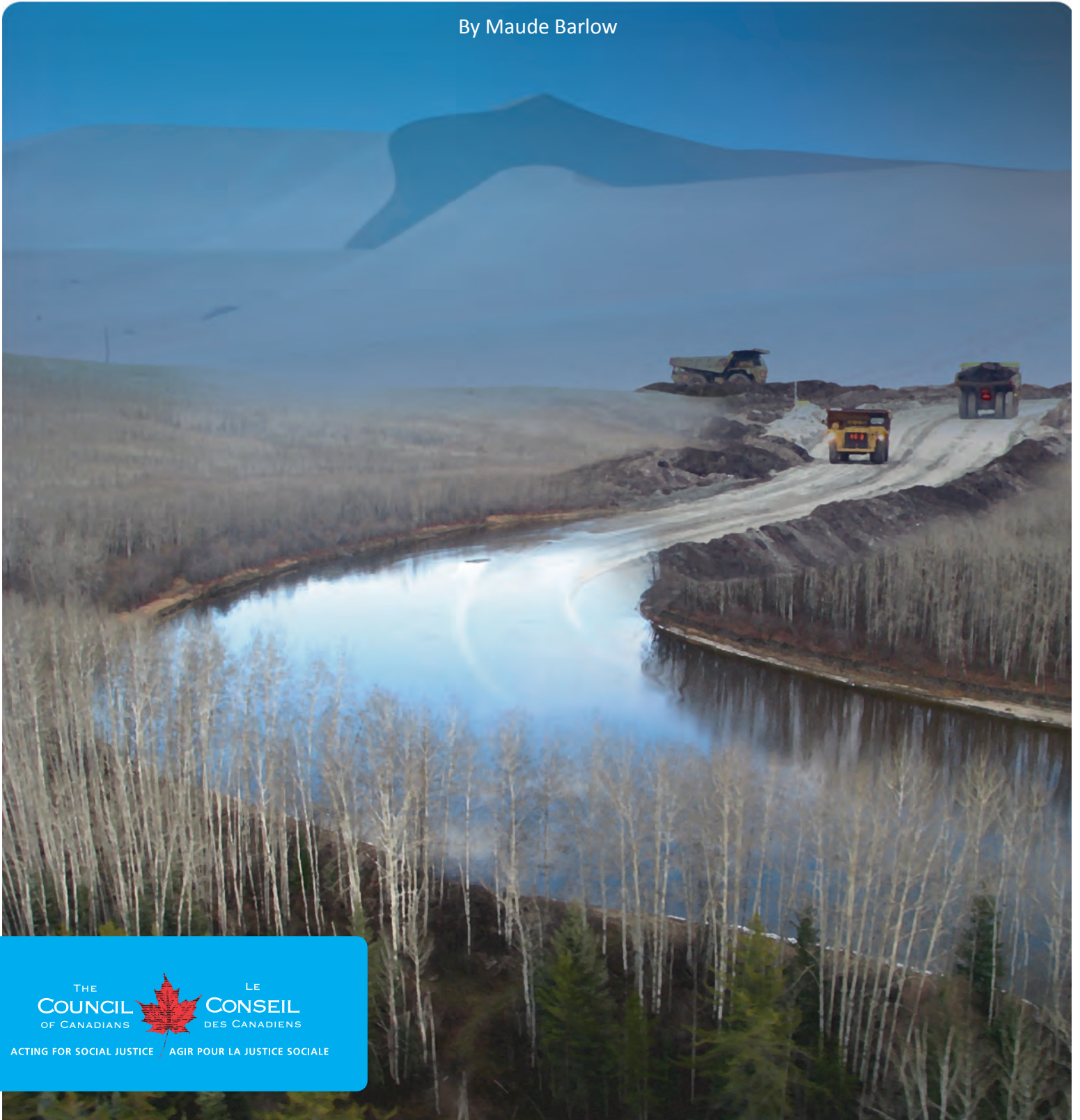


BLUE BETRAYAL

The Harper government's assault on Canada's freshwater

By Maude Barlow



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Photo by Wolfgang Schmidt

About the Author

Maude Barlow is the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and chairs the board of Washington-based Food and Water Watch. She is a board member of the San Francisco-based International Forum on Globalization and a Councillor with the Hamburg-based World Future Council.

Maude is the recipient of twelve honorary doctorates as well as many awards, including the 2005 Right Livelihood Award (known as the “Alternative Nobel”), the 2005 Lannan Foundation Cultural Freedom Fellowship Award, the Citation of Lifetime Achievement at the 2008 Canadian Environment Awards, the 2009 Earth Day Canada Outstanding Environmental Achievement Award, the 2009 Planet in Focus Eco Hero Award, and the 2011 EarthCare Award, the highest international honour of the Sierra Club (US).

In 2008/2009, she served as Senior Advisor on Water to the 63rd President of the United Nations General Assembly and was a leader in the campaign to have water recognized as a human right by the UN. She is also the author of dozens of reports, as well as 17 books, including her latest, *Blue Future: Protecting Water For People And The Planet Forever*.

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BLUE BETRAYAL:

The Harper government's assault on Canada's freshwater

Canadians have long taken our water heritage for granted. This is largely due to the myth that we have an abundance of water and can never run out. While it is true that compared to many other parts of the world Canada is blessed with water, it is false that we have water to waste or sell.

It is often quoted that Canada holds one-fifth of the world's water supplies and until recently, this "fact" could be found on the Environment Canada website. As aquatic scientist John Sprague explains, this estimation comes from tabulating the water sitting in Canada's lakes. The only way to use this water is to drain the lakes, which would obviously destroy whole watersheds. Canada has, in fact, about 6.5 per cent of the world's renewable water – water that we can use without destroying the stock.

But even this is misleading as most of our water flows north to mighty rivers out of reach of the 90 per cent of Canadians who live in the south along the Canada-U.S. border. The supply of water in the south is only 2.6 per cent of the world's total and is diminishing at a "troubling rate" according to gov-

ernment studies. Largely due to climate change, southern Canada has lost enough water to fill 1.4 million Olympic-sized swimming pools every year over the past three decades – a decline of 8.5 per cent.¹

A 2012 study by a group of American scientists, published in the journal *Geoscience*, stated that the drought western North America has experienced during the last decade is the worst in 800 years. The situation will steadily decline, say the authors, and the droughts we are experiencing now will likely be seen as the "wet end" of a drier hydro-climate predicted for the rest of the 21st century.² Canada is not immune to the water crisis facing the planet.

This report will examine Prime Minister Stephen Harper's record on freshwater protection. It is important to state that the Harper government is not the first to have neglected Canada's freshwater heritage. Successive federal Liberal and Conservative governments have bought into the myth of water abundance and have allowed serious deterioration of our lakes, rivers and groundwater.

Many existing threats

There are many serious issues facing Canada's freshwater. Little is known about groundwater supplies that more and more Canadians rely every year for their water sources. Climate change, industrial farming, melting glaciers, wetland and forest destruction, oil, gas and mineral extraction and the dumping of waste into our waterways are all growing threats to our diminishing water supplies.

Multipoint pollution, climate change, eutrophication, over-extraction, invasive species, and wetland loss are all taking their toll on the Great Lakes watershed, which provides life and livelihood to over 40 million people and thousands of species who live around it. There are at least 204 pollutants in the Great Lakes.³ On average, Canadian industrial facilities release almost three times more carcinogenic and reproductive toxins than American facilities.

Fish from the Great Lakes are loaded with contaminants such as mercury, dioxins, lead and PCBs. The Sierra Club calls the sewer systems in many Great Lakes cities "antiquated" and reports they routinely dump raw sewage in the Lakes.

Industrial and agribusiness-based chemical contaminants from the North American heartland are killing the beluga whales of the St. Lawrence Estuary. The St. Lawrence has been named among the top 10 most endangered rivers in North America by *American Rivers*. One-quarter of all the St. Lawrence belugas have cancer and are among the most contaminated marine mammals in the world. In just 70 years, 90 per cent of the belugas of the St. Lawrence have disappeared.

Intensive hog farming is largely blamed for the state of Lake Winnipeg, the tenth largest lake in the world and often referred to as "Canada's sickest lake." What was once a small patch of algae, now grows to smother more than half of the 24,500-square-kilometre lake each summer. *Maclean's Magazine* calls the algae the "putrid green mat," which is twice the size of Prince Edward Island and is killing the fish and destroying the tourist industry. Some scientists fear Lake Winnipeg is already beyond help.

Canada is one of the few industrialized countries in the world not to have legally enforced drinking water standards. A recent study by Ecojustice found that Canada's water standards continue to lag behind international benchmarks and are at risk of falling even further behind. "There is no reason Canadians shouldn't have the safest drinking water in the world," said study co-author Randy Christensen. "But regulatory efforts required to create, implement and maintain strong, world-class standards are sorely lacking."⁴

Most at risk from poor drinking water and sanitation services are Indigenous peoples. First Nations' homes are 90 per cent more likely to be without running water than the homes of other Canadians.

Canada's fresh water in peril



There are at least 204 pollutants in the Great Lakes.

25% of the St. Lawrence belugas have cancer. Over 90% have disappeared in the past 70 years.



Algae now covers over 12,000 square kilometres of Lake Winnipeg each summer.

The Harper agenda against the environment becomes clear

While the government of Stephen Harper inherited this situation, it has distinguished itself as being far more than just another negligent government when it comes to protecting Canada's freshwater heritage. The Harper government has taken clear steps to gut the regulatory framework that – modest as it was – offered some protections to lakes, rivers and groundwater in Canada, and turned policy and practice upside down to advance the interests of the energy industry.

Early on in its mandate, the Harper government allowed a loophole in the Metal Mining Effluent Regulation of the *Fisheries Act* to give the green light to mining companies to dump their toxic waste into lakes. Originally intended only to apply to lakes that were already dead, “Schedule 2” reclassified healthy lakes as a “tailings impoundment areas” and no longer protected them under the *Fisheries Act*. Already Sandy Pond in Newfoundland has been destroyed under this loophole and Environment Canada has released the names of 29 natural water bodies that mining companies have applied to use as toxic waste dumps.

In Bill C-38 (2012) and Bill C-45, (2013), two notorious omnibus bills each more than 400 pages long, the Harper government made drastic and destructive changes to freshwater protection in Canada, all with no public or Indigenous consultation.

The omnibus bills further gutted the *Fisheries Act*, once the strongest piece of Canadian legislation to protect water. The old *Fisheries Act* clearly stated that it was a criminal offence to deposit a deleterious substance into waters inhabited by fish. The new law no longer protects these habitats and is limited to “serious harm” to fish that have commercial, recreational or Aboriginal purposes. The new rules allow the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to authorize deposits of deleterious substances if the “whole of the deposit is not acutely lethal to fish.” The regulation defines “acutely lethal” as a deposit that kills more than 50 per cent of fish at 100 per cent concentration over a 96-hour period. As Council of Canadians national water campaigner Emma Lui points out, this threshold does not take into ac-

count that sometimes the most damaging pollution is slow and chronic.

When the Harper government modified the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* (NWPA) it stripped protections from 99 per cent of lakes and rivers in Canada. The new act exempts pipelines, which are a huge threat to Canada's waterways. Major pipelines and interprovincial power lines can now cross over and under more than 31,000 lakes and 2.25 million rivers without federal scrutiny. As well, overseeing the few remaining protections of navigable waters has been transferred to the National Energy Board, itself now only a body that can “recommend” on a course of action. Final decisions on major pipeline and extraction projects are now up to Cabinet.

“ The Navigable Waters Protection Act no longer protects water. The Fisheries Act no longer protects fish. The Environmental Assessment Act no longer requires environmental assessments be done before important decisions are made.”

- Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

The removal of protections from 99 per cent of lakes and rivers was decried as a violation of Indigenous treaty rights by First Nations and spurred the grassroots “Idle No More” movement. The Mikisew Cree won a Federal Court legal challenge affirming that the Harper government should have consulted with First Nations before introducing the omnibus bills C-38 and C-45.

In eliminating the Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission, the Harper government threatened the safety of workers handling noxious chemicals. This move scrapped assessments on whether companies were in compliance with Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. Ninety per cent of companies were out of compliance in 2011-2012.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act required an environmental assessment of all major construction projects under federal jurisdiction, including near waterways that cross provincial boundaries. It was replaced with a watered-down version that immediately resulted in the cancellation of 3,000 active environmental assessments. More disturbing, the new rules give Cabinet the right to determine which projects will be assessed and to ignore the findings of ones they permit.

As Lake Ontario Waterkeeper states: *"The Navigable Waters Protection Act* no longer protects water. *The Fisheries Act* no longer protects fish. *The Environmental Assessment Act* no longer requires environmental assessments be done before important decisions are made."⁵

The Harper government has also singularly targeted independent science and scientists, shutting down dozens of research projects, facilities and institutes conducting basic scientific research. Scientists and environmentalists put up a huge fight to save the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA), the world's leading freshwater research centre, which has done ground breaking work on acid rain, household pollutants and mercury contamination. Fortunately the Ontario and Manitoba governments have rescued the ELA temporarily, but its future is still precarious.



The Harper government also slashed staff at the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters, the most important science-monitoring agency for the imperilled Great Lakes, and killed the Global Environmental Monitoring System Water Program, a Canadian research network that monitored the health of freshwater lakes around the world for the United Nations.

Deep government cuts to federal departments and agencies responsible for protecting the environment threaten science, the environment and public health. Cuts include: Parks Canada, which is no longer required to conduct environmental audits; Environment Canada, which gutted the unit that responds to oil spill emergencies just as the government is supporting massive new pipeline construction; and Fisheries and Oceans, which has shut down its marine pollution monitoring program and laid off all habitat inspectors in B.C.

The Harper government has also invited energy companies to begin drilling for oil in the ecologically fragile Gulf of St. Lawrence, having watered down the *Coasting Trade Act* and gutted the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research, the only agency that had the ability to assess offshore projects.

Of paramount concern for basic science is the elimination of the grants programs administered by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, which funded operations at experimental research facilities. Gone too is the 24-year old National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy, an independent source of expert advice the government no longer wants to hear. Federal funding was pulled from the Canadian Environmental Network. The National Science Advisor was let go and not replaced.

Mark Calzavara of the Council of Canadians spreads the message during the campaign to save the Experimental Lakes Area.

The energy industry sets environmental policy

The Harper government's cuts to Canada's environmental laws were spelled out in a December 2012 letter obtained by Greenpeace. The letter revealed that the oil and gas industry – through a group called the Energy Framework Initiative that includes the major players in the industry – outlined six laws it wanted amended in order for it to do its work. Those laws included *the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, *the Fisheries Act*, *the Navigable Waters Protection Act*, *the Species at Risk Act*, and *the Migratory Birds Convention Act*. All but the last, which is a treaty with the U.S. and therefore not easily broken, have been savaged.

A report by the Ottawa-based Polaris Institute found that the Canadian energy industry has gained unrivalled access to the Harper government in recent years. Since 2008, there have been 2,733 meetings held between the oil industry and federal government officials, many of them cabinet ministers. This number outstrips meetings with environmental organizations by 463 per cent.

The Harper government is determined to turn Canada into an energy superpower and is removing all impediments. Prime Minister Harper abandoned the Kyoto Protocol, making Canada the only country in the world to ratify and then abandon that climate treaty. As funding for scientific and environmental research is slashed, energy subsidies top \$34 billion each year in direct support to producers and through uncollected taxes on externalized costs, reports the International Monetary Fund.⁶

The Globe and Mail called the October 2014 annual report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development “scathing” and “a sweeping critique” of the Harper record. Commissioner Julie Gelfand wrote that the Harper government has no detailed plan to meet its emissions reduction targets, is on pace to fall well short of meeting its international obligations, and has made no long term commitment to environmental monitoring in the tar sands region. In fact, Commissioner Gelfand reported that the federal government has no plan in place to monitor the tar sands beyond 2015!⁷

As well, the Harper government has turned the National Energy Board (NEB), once charged with protecting public safety, the environment and landowners' rights on proposed pipeline projects, into a “captured regulator,” says journalist and author Andrew Nikiforuk. The NEB is basically an enabling partner with the big energy companies whose board members are pro-energy lawyers and engineers with ties to the industry. The board is made up of white Conservatives from Calgary, Nikiforuk points out, and there are no board members who are experts in public health, environmental assessment or pipeline safety, or any First Nations representatives.⁸

“ It’s reached a stage where the (National Energy Board) is not interested in the public interest, and more interested in facilitating the infrastructure for the oil and gas industry”

- Marc Elieson, former CEO of BC Hydro and former Suncor board member.

This view is backed up by Marc Elieson, former CEO of BC Hydro and former Suncor board member who, in November 2014, withdrew as an intervener from hearings into a proposed Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, accusing the board of being a rubber stamp for the industry. Elieson expressed dismay that the NEB has dropped oral cross-examination of proponents and had not responded to 2,000 questions submitted by interveners, rejecting 95 per cent of the queries. “It’s reached a stage where the NEB is not interested in the public interest, and more interested in facilitating the infrastructure for the oil and gas industry,” he said.⁹

Deregulation endangers Canada's freshwater

These regulatory changes, made to facilitate growth of the energy sector, present a clear and present danger to Canada's freshwater systems. Energy projects such as the growth of the tar sands, new pipelines and fracking operations are being given the green light with almost no federal scrutiny.

Of the 3,000 assessments that were cancelled in the omnibus Bill C-38, several included pipeline project reviews where communities had raised serious concerns about drinking water, reports Council of Canadians energy and climate justice campaigner Andrea Harden-Donahue. For instance, the environmental assessment for TransCanada's Keystone XL project to construct and operate a crude oil terminal and pipeline infrastructure near Hardisty, Alberta was cancelled.

The fracking frenzy in B.C. is now able to grow with little or no federal oversight. The EnCana operation in the Horn River Basin of northeastern British Columbia is massive, with 16 two-hectare well sites and 20 well pads. The Fort Nelson First Nation is deeply concerned about plans to expand fracking in the area that would dam the Peace River, flooding hundreds of square kilometres. There are plans to approve dozens of new licences that would allow energy companies to take billions of litres of water

from local lakes and rivers. The band calls the project the "Shale Gale" and has stated that it represents "the largest and most destructive industrial force that our waters have ever known."

A federal environmental assessment of Encana's request to withdraw 10 million litres of water per day for fracking from the Fort Nelson River was another victim of the Harper deregulation.

Federal oversight of Alberta's tar sands is now compromised, putting local water supplies at greater risk. Alberta is home to the largest deposits of tar sands in the world and processes almost 2 million barrels of bitumen every day. It takes huge quantities of water to steam blast oil from the sands. For every barrel of oil recovered from the tar sands, three to five barrels of water are used to produce it. Every year, Alberta tar sands production consumes an amount of water equivalent to the residential use of water by almost 2 million Canadians. At the tar sands' current rate of growth, by 2050, the downstream flow of the Athabasca River is projected to decrease by 30 per cent, according to the Pembina Institute.

Tailings ponds in the Alberta tar sands. Tar Sands operations use and destroy millions of litres of fresh water each day.





A health department notice warns residents away from the Kalamazoo River, which was devastated by 3.8 million litres of diluted bitumen after a pipeline rupture in 2010.

After the water is used it is dumped in massive, toxic lagoons so dangerous, birds die on impact. One hundred and seventy square kilometres of these poisoned lakes leach 11 million litres of toxic water into the watershed every day, says aquatic scientist David Schindler. If current expansion plans are realized (although the drop in oil prices may change these plans), the Alberta tar sands could one day be using – and destroying – about 20 million barrels of water per day.

This expansion requires the construction of huge new pipelines, raising deep concern over potential spills. The proposed Northern Gateway pipeline would carry dilbit – tar sands bitumen diluted with liquid chemicals such as benzene – across 800 pristine rivers and streams to be loaded onto supertankers carrying the dirtiest oil on Earth by ship to markets in Asia. The proposed Energy East pipeline – the biggest of them all with a carrying capacity of 1.1 million barrels of bitumen a day – would cross over at least 90 watersheds and 961 waterways along its route. The crude would be shipped from a deep-sea port in New Brunswick to the U.S. and Asia. Both of these pipelines would cross multiple First Nations territories.

There are also plans to expand north-south pipelines around and even under the Great Lakes, putting the watershed in grave danger. Enbridge's "Lakehead System" is already one of the largest networks of pipelines in the world and the company has major plans for expansion in the region. It has sought permission from the U.S. State Department to double

the capacity of its Alberta Clipper line, now carrying Alberta crude to a refinery in Superior, Wisconsin. If permitted, this pipeline would carry 800,000 barrels of dilbit a day. The company that owns the Wisconsin refinery has applied to build a deep-sea port that would move some of the bitumen across the Great Lakes by barge to other refineries. Communities have opposed Suncor's plans to ship tar sands bitumen on the St. Lawrence River. The Harper government changed regulations in December 2013, increasing the size of ships allowed and putting the waterway at even greater risk of a spill.

Unlike conventional crude, diluted bitumen sinks in water, making cleanup efforts far more difficult. A spill or accident would devastate the Great Lakes or any of the thousands of waterways these current and proposed pipelines cross. Pipeline ruptures of Alberta dilbit in the U.S. have proven devastating to the local watersheds. A 2010 rupture in Michigan spilled 3.8 million litres of dilbit into the Kalamazoo River and contaminated close to 60 kilometres of water. Canadian officials and panels have warned that Canada is unprepared for spills of diluted bitumen and other noxious substances increasingly being carried near or on Canadian waterways.¹⁰ This is simply the worst time a government could have chosen to gut federal regulations, exposing Canada's entire freshwater system to devastating threats.

Harper opens the door to water privatization

Deregulation is not the only way the Harper government has threatened water. In Canada, water has always been considered an essential public service. While the delivery of water services falls to local governments, provincial and federal funds are required for infrastructure investment and repair. In the past, these funds have come with no strings attached.

However, the Harper government favours the privatization of water services in Canada through a process called public-private partnerships, or P3s, whereby a municipality brings in a private contractor to deliver water services on a for-profit basis. In 2009, the government set up a Crown Corporation called Public-Private Partnership Canada (PPP Canada) with a fund to promote private operations and financing of public infrastructure and services. Five years later, the government renewed the Building Canada Fund by allocating \$14 billion of federal funds to the Crown Corporation, \$1.25 billion of which is earmarked for P3s. New rules now mean that municipalities and First Nations seeking federal funding for upgrading or building new water infrastructure projects that cost more than \$100 million must adopt a P3 as a condition of receiving the money.

Canadian municipalities are being given no choice by an ideologically driven federal government. While some, such as Abbotsford, B.C., have rejected federal funds that come with such strings attached, others, such as Regina, Saskatchewan and Saint John, New Brunswick have accepted federal funding and opted for P3 projects.

The privatization of water services has been tried and discredited. Studies show that private water utilities cut workers and services, skirt pollution rules and raise water rates. They also end up being more expensive in the long run. In the United States, private water companies charge 33 per cent more for water and 63 per cent more for sewage services than local government providers.¹¹ More than 185 municipalities around the world have tried privatizing their water services and brought them back under public control. Yet the Harper gov-

ernment is forcing a for-profit water system on the Canadian people.

Furthermore, by promoting the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), the Harper government will give French utility giants Suez and Veolia the right to challenge Canadian municipalities that try to remunicipalize their water services if, in the future, they decide privatization was a mistake. CETA contains an “investor-state” provision that will allow foreign corporations to sue the government of another country if they believe their “right to profit” has been affected by a law or practice in that country, such as returning to a public system after having privatized an essential public service.

CETA will also permit Swiss bottled water giant Nestlé, whose water division’s headquarters are in France, the right to challenge provincial bans or limits imposed on bottled water takings.

Accounting for Public-Private Partnerships (P3s)

33%

The increase in costs for privatized water services.

63%

The increase in costs for privatized sewage services.

185

The number of municipalities that have tried and then abandoned privatized water services.

\$1.25 billion

The amount of money PPP Canada has allocated to P3s.

Canada is a large net exporter of virtual water. Due to its high volume of agricultural exports, Canada is a major virtual water exporter, second in the world only to the United States. Our freshwater heritage is at risk from the lack of government concern; poor information, mapping and research on our groundwater and surface water supplies; and the almost total absence of policy intervention by any level of government to set conditions on access to fresh water sources for export-driven production.

Under CETA, Canadian beef producers will export close to 70,000 tonnes of beef to Europe and pork producers, an undisclosed, but higher amount of pork. Meat production is highly water intensive. It takes over 15 million litres of water to produce one tonne of beef. Much of these beef exports will come from water-stressed Alberta where the industry is already (pre-CETA) expected to double its water footprint by 2025. Much of the pork will come from Manitoba where hog operations are already the acknowledged source of much of the eutrophication killing Lake Winnipeg. In promoting CETA with no protections for our water, Harper is further threatening our declining water supplies, already at such risk from deregulation.

But CETA isn't the only trade deal having a negative impact.

In September 2014, the Harper government ratified the deeply unpopular Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with China that will give the Chinese state-owned energy company, CNOOC, the right to sue the Canadian government if the pipelines the company is depending on to carry Alberta tar sands bitumen to export markets don't get built.

These, and other new trade deals further entrench trade agreements that give corporations access to Canada's water. Investor-state rights first appeared in the 1995 North American Free Trade Agreement and have exploded since then. NAFTA was used to compensate American toxic disposal company SD Myers \$8 million for loss of profit after Canada banned the trade of PCBs to protect its water. NAFTA was used to compensate American pulp and paper giant AbitibiBowater \$130 million for "water rights" it left behind when it abandoned its opera-

tions in Newfoundland and Labrador, also leaving behind unpaid pensions. Currently, American energy company Lone Pine Resources is suing the government of Canada for \$250 million because in 2011, Quebec shut the door on shale gas fracking in order to protect its water reserves.

What these and other investor-state agreements do is lock in the privatization and deregulation Prime Minister Harper favours long after he has left politics. Any future government that tries to recreate the water protection rules gutted by this government will likely face challenges from foreign corporations that profit from the lower standards.



Investor-state rights are the trojan horse of free trade deals, allowing private corporations to challenge government regulations – including environmental protections and municipal services.

Harper's foreign aid policy endangers water in the Global South

The Harper government's negative reach extends to water beyond Canadian borders. Stephen Harper openly supports the Canadian mining industry, increasingly criticized around the world for its human rights and environmental abuses.

Canada is home to 75 per cent of the world's mining companies and an industry report found Canadian companies four times more likely to be at the centre of human rights and environmental conflicts than other western countries.¹² There are currently 118 mining conflicts in 15 countries in Latin America. Mining Watch Canada says that almost one-third of these involve Canadian companies. In Mexico, where Canadian companies account for 204 of the 269 foreign mining companies, a series of assassinations of anti-mining activists has set the stakes very high for anyone resisting big mines, and has made Canada a pariah in the international human rights community.

Canadian open-pit mining operations in Guatemala endanger local water supplies, despite strong community resistance.



Yet the Harper government has been working hard alongside the industry to create industry-friendly mining laws in the Global South that have resulted in weaker environmental and human rights laws in a number of countries, enabling Canadian mining companies to operate with less scrutiny. In 2010, the Harper government defeated a bill that would have established some controls on the behaviour of these companies when operating abroad. The next year, it announced an agreement – paid for with public funds – between three Canadian mining giants and three leading aid agencies to link foreign aid to “economic development.” The condition for receiving funding was that the aid money must be used to promote development projects linked to Canadian mining companies in the recipient country.

The Canadian International Council says this initiative is emblematic of a new turn in Canadian foreign policy, which it calls “the commercialization of aid.”¹³ Under the guise of support to corporate social responsibility, the Harper government has

shifted aid policy from one based on humanitarian principles to one promoting the bottom line interests of Canadian mining companies. This comes at a time when the foreign aid budget has been cut badly and many NGOs that refuse to participate in such “partnerships” have had their funding slashed. In a 2014 report, the Canadian International Development Agency clearly spelled out the Harper government’s new policy: the commercial interests of Canadian industry are now paramount when determining which countries will receive foreign aid.¹⁴

The changes made to Canada’s aid policy have a direct and very negative impact on the water of many communities in the Global South. Currently, mining is the second largest industrial user of water (not including agriculture) after the power generation industry, reports industry journal *Global Water Intelligence*. The mining industry uses between seven and nine billion cubic metres of water annually – about as much water as a country like Nigeria or

Malaysia uses every year.¹⁵ As well, each year, mining companies dump more than 180 million tons of hazardous waste into rivers, lakes and oceans worldwide, 1.5 times the amount of municipal solid waste the U.S. sends to landfills every year.

In their 2012 report *Troubled Waters*, Mining Watch Canada and Washington-based Earthworks show how many mining companies, including Canadian mining companies, continue to use worst practices in their waste disposal when they have alternative methods available. Their tailings can contain as many as three-dozen dangerous chemicals, including arsenic, lead, mercury and cyanide. Many companies are guilty of a double standard, dumping their mine wastes into the rivers and oceans of other countries, even though their home countries have bans or restrictions on the practice. Of the world’s largest mining companies, only one has policies against dumping in rivers and oceans and none have policies against dumping in lakes.¹⁶

Conclusion

The Harper government has put Canada’s freshwater heritage at great risk and increased the likelihood of water pollution by Canadian mining companies in the Global South. The values of greed driving the Harper government’s policies are not shared by the majority of Canadians who want our waterways protected by strong laws and who view water as an essential public service. It will take political will, given the straightjacket that NAFTA, CETA

and other similar trade deals have imposed on future governments, to undo the damage done in this last decade. But in a world running out of accessible water, we have no choice but to fight for the laws and policies that will protect our water for people and the planet forever.

Maude Barlow speaking on Parliament Hill at a rally against the destruction of the tar sands.



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Further reading



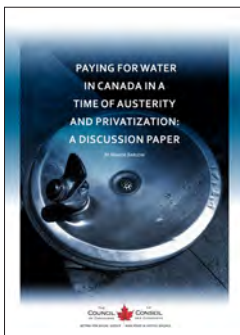
Energy East: Where oil meets water outlines the risks associated with transporting diluted bitumen and the erosion of environmental protections, and describes some of the over 900 waterways threatened by the proposed Energy East pipeline.

Read the report online at: www.canadians.org/energyeast-waterways



Liquid Pipeline: Extreme energy's threat to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River details plans to transport dangerous new forms of energy – as well as the waste from more traditional forms – around, under and on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. It is also a call to action to stop these plans before it is too late.

Read the report online at: www.canadians.org/liquid-pipeline



Paying for water in Canada in a time of austerity and privatization explores the issue of how to pay for water access and water services in Canada at a time when the Harper government and many provincial governments are slashing funding to essential services.

Read the report online at: www.canadians.org/paying-for-water



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