

February 2012

TO ALL CUPE CHARTERED ORGANIZATIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

World Water Day: Solidarity and action, locally and globally

Water activists in Canada and around the world are mobilizing to mark World Water Day, March 22. It's a day to celebrate our victories and reflect on the challenges we face in 2012.

At home, CUPE members are working on campuses and in their communities to promote the value of public drinking water services and stop the sale and distribution of bottled water through the *Back the tap* coalition. The campaign is year-round, with a focus on March 15 (Bottled Water Free Day) as a day of collective action. Your local can get involved by visiting www.backthetap.ca.

Through this work and in many other ways, CUPE members are protecting public water services from privatization. As the federal government continues to underfund infrastructure and promote for-profit water services, we can draw on the lessons learned from the defeat of water privatization plans in Abbotsford, British Columbia, and on Vancouver Island. CUPE joined with concerned residents in Water Watch coalitions that stopped two public-private partnership schemes, including one being heavily pushed by the federal government and its privatization arm, PPP Canada Inc.

PPP Canada is pushing for privatization of public water and wastewater services, targeting underfunded municipalities that are struggling to meet their obligations. This push to privatize will intensify as new federal wastewater regulations come into effect. The federal government isn't committing any funds for the plant upgrades needed to meet these much-needed higher standard of treatment, opening the door to privatization.

CUPE is organizing internally and with our allies to stop for-profit delivery of water and wastewater services. It's a fight that will take place community by community, drawing on our highly successful Water Watch coalition model. And it's a fight we'll take on federally, working with our allies in Parliament to expose the true costs of water privatization and demand public solutions to the infrastructure crisis. You can learn more and stay up-to-date at www.cupe.ca/water.

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PAUL MOIST – National President / Président national CHARLES FLEURY – National Secretary-Treasurer / Secrétaire-trésorier national

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Another top priority is action on First Nations' water needs. We are working with community members on concrete ways to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation services on reserves, ending a scandalous and unacceptable situation. One area of focus is helping Aboriginal members get the training and skills development they need to become water operators. We will also put pressure on the federal government to end the on-reserve water crisis now.

This year is also a crucial year internationally, as negotiations continue on the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union. This new trade deal would encourage and lock in privatization of Canadian water and wastewater services. CUPE and its allies are calling for water and other vital services to be exempt from CETA, and a growing number of municipalities are demanding they be exempted from the deal altogether. You can learn more and get involved at www.cupe.ca/ceta.

CUPE will also take a stand against the global push to privatize at the sixth World Water Forum, being held in France in March. Sponsored by water multinationals Veolia and Suez, the forum is deeply embedded in a corporate network that promotes water privatization as the answer to the world's water problems. CUPE has taken part in resistance to every World Water Forum since 2000, and will be working with Public Services International, the Council of Canadians and the global water justice movement to challenge the pro-privatization agenda at the official forum, and promote public solutions at alternative events.

The United Nations has made water and food security the theme of World Water Day 2012 – a reminder of the fundamental economic and social inequalities that must be addressed globally to ensure the right to water and food for all people on the planet. A better world isn't just possible, it is necessary.

On World Water Day and every day of the year, CUPE is proud to be working to protect and improve public water services – and pushing for public water services to be established where none exist. Together, in CUPE and with our allies, we will continue to protect water resources and services – for future generations, and for the planet. Public water is a human right!

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer