

Getting Started

Water Watch committees

CUPE locals across Canada are being encouraged to create Water Watch committees. These committees will reach out to the public – making them aware of our concerns and enlisting their support – and put pressure on elected officials to protect and adequately fund public delivery of water services.

Water Watch committees will bring together CUPE members, community activists, environmentalists and local allies. To help in organizing these committees and developing a plan of action, this kit includes background information and a statement of principles for the Water Watch campaign.

In this Water Watch kit, you will find:

- Information on starting a Water Watch committees;
- Founding principles of the Water Watch campaign;
- Helpful tips on coalition building, media relations and political action;
- Draft resolutions for your Local, municipal council, and CUPE District and Labour Councils;
- Background information;
- Research materials;
- A leaflet for distribution to the general public;
- A video for public presentation;
- Artwork to use as ads in local and community papers, or as posters.

CUPE National has set up a toll-free line to support Water Watch campaign. Call 1-877-CUPE-H2O (1-877-287-3426) to keep us informed of developments in your community or to ask for materials or support for your committee.

As well, you can find information under the Fighting Privatization section of CUPE's Web site (www.cupe.ca), by e-mailing waterwatch@cupe.ca or writing to CUPE National at 21 Florence Street, Ottawa K2P 0W6.

Keep this binder handy. You will receive further information and materials as the campaign progresses.

Pour obtenir une version française de cette trousse téléphonez au 1-877-SCFP-EAU (1-877-723-7328).



Water Watch Committees

What is a Water Watch committee?

Water Watch committees are the front line of defence against the privatization of water. Made up of CUPE members and community and environmental activists, Water Watch committees will fight to keep water safe, clean and public.

What do Water Watch committees watch?

The priorities of each committee will vary, depending on local conditions and the nature of the local threat. In some communities, there is an immediate risk of privatization. In others, water exports are the threat. In all communities, there is a need to protect water quality, defend public control of our water resources and assure adequate funding for water and wastewater treatment.

Across the country, Water Watch committees will track:

- Privatization bids for municipal water services
- Water quality
- Water rates and accessibility
- Funding for water and wastewater infrastructure
- Wastewater treatment
- Water pipeline proposals
- Water withdrawals for export
- Threats to water habitats from development pressures or pollution



How do Water Watch committees get started?

CUPE Locals or District Councils can start a Water Watch committee by adopting the resolution that is included in this kit (C1.3) at your next local executive meeting or membership meeting.

Recruit members for the committee from among your local membership, drawing in activists who have time to devote to the committee and sisters and brothers who haven't been active. If you have an environment committee, you will want someone from that group to participate on the Water Watch committee.

Next, reach out to others who are concerned about water issues. The local chapter of the Council of Canadians includes members who are concerned about the threat of water exports. Local environmental activists are concerned about water quality and control of our resources. Other allies you may want to approach include members of anti-poverty groups, women's groups and local aboriginal groups.

Included in this kit, you'll find a copy of the Statement of Principles (A3.1) that forms the basis of the Water Watch campaign. This statement is meant to serve as a foundation for all the Water Watch committees across the country, setting out the common cause that binds this diverse group of workers, community and environmental activists.

The chair of the Water Watch committee should be someone from the Local with a commitment to oversee the general work of the committee. In some cases, you may want to have a co-chair from the community for the committee.

What do Water Watch committees do?

Again, the action plans of Water Watch committees will vary from one community to another. In some, they will be fighting immediate threats. In others, they'll serve as an early warning system.

The first thing to do is find out if your municipal council is considering the privatization of water or wastewater services. Talk to councillors and senior staff. Review minutes of council and committee meetings. Keep track of visits by consultants and corporate executives who may be promoting privatization bids.

If there are no clear signs or rumours that council is considering a privatization bid, the Water Watch committee should begin a proactive campaign to protect public control of water services. Make a presentation to municipal council on the dangers of privatization. Ask council to pass a motion supporting public ownership and operation of water and wastewater services. A sample motion is included in this kit (C2.3).

If your municipality is looking at privatizing water services, then your campaign and the work of your committee will take on a different nature. An immediate plan of action is in order. You will want to reach out to community allies and put pressure on municipal councillors, exposing the risks of privatization while promoting the alternatives.

In this regard, it's important to show that municipalities are under increasing financial pressures as a result of downloading of services and cuts in funding from the federal and provincial governments. An important element of the committee's work is to build pressure on the federal and provincial governments to provide adequate funding to expand and upgrade our water and wastewater systems. This may require that you meet with MPs or members of the provincial legislature.

Other activities might include:

- Educating members and the public about the threat of water for profit
- Getting support from Labour Councils and other groups
- Sponsoring a community event on World Water Day on March 22
- Organizing a local "teach-in" on water for profit and water quality
- Identifying corporate polluters and privateers
- Promoting water conservation
- Identifying threats to water quality
- Promoting access to safe water for all local residents
- Protecting natural water habitats
- Calling for a national consultation to shape water policy
- Linking to other Water Watch committees at the regional and national level

Who do Water Watch committees target?

Water Watch committees will be active locally, provincially and nationally, holding governments at all levels to account for protecting public control of water services and resources.

- Municipal governments will be targeted to protect public ownership and operation of municipal water supplies. As part of this effort, we will work with municipal governments for increased funding from federal and provincial governments to upgrade and expand water and wastewater facilities.
- Provincial governments will be lobbied to provide adequate funding for water services and waste water treatment and strengthen environmental regulation and enforcement.

- The federal government will be pressured to provide a significant increase in funding for the expansion and upgrading of water and wastewater facilities. In particular, the campaign will call for a major new funding commitment to water infrastructure in the 2000 federal budget.
- The federal government will also be pressured to adopt legislation prohibiting the bulk export of water.
- Corporations that exploit water for profit and damage water quality will be targeted.
- CUPE members and the public will be encouraged to conserve water and protect water quality while governments will be pressured to protect water quality and the environment.

How do Water Watch committees connect?

CUPE National has set up a toll-free Water Watch line. The phone number is 1-877-CUPE-H2O (1-877-287-3426) for service in English and 1-877-SCFP-EAU (1-877-723-7328) for service in French.

Once you have set up your Water Watch committee, phone the toll-free line and let us know that you are up and running. Or fax us the FAXback form included in this kit (A5.1). That way, we can keep you informed of the progress of the campaign.

We can also put you in touch with other organizations or activists in your community - and across the country - who are interested in supporting this campaign. We'll provide regular updates, share winning strategies from other communities and help set up a national emergency response network.

As well, you can contact us by e-mail at waterwatch@cupe.ca or through CUPE's Web site at www.cupe.ca.

CUPE will support committees with research and communications tools. As well, locals may wish to apply for a cost share campaign, with CUPE National matching your local contribution.



Statement of Principles

Water is of immeasurable importance to Canada's environment, economy, public health and identity. Canada's rivers, lakes and groundwater have shaped our history, powered our industrial development, sustained our health and nourished our spirits.

Nevertheless, Canadians can no longer take water for granted. In addition to the many factors that threaten water quality and aquatic ecosystem health in Canada, we are in danger of losing public control of water resources and management.

Increasingly, water is being regarded as a commodity that can be bought and sold on the market. Private corporations are gaining a foothold in the management of public water services such as drinking water and sewage treatment. In addition, there are now several active proposals to export Canadian water by bulk shipments or by diverting rivers.

In light of these threats, we recognize the following principles:

- An adequate supply of clean water for peoples' daily living needs is a basic human right. This right is best ensured by keeping water and sewage services in the public sector, by regulating the protection of water supplies and by promoting the efficient use of water.
- It is wrong – environmentally, economically and morally – to engage in the large-scale trade of water. Water must not be regarded as a commodity for exchange in the international marketplace. Adequate supplies of clean water for people in water-scarce regions can only be ensured by promoting conservation and protection of local water resources. Importing water is not an economically or environmentally sustainable strategy for dealing with water scarcity.



- Water is the lifeblood of the environment as well as an essential resource for humans. Each generation must ensure that the abundance and quality of water is not diminished as a result of its activities. Greater efforts must be made to restore the health of aquatic ecosystems that have already been degraded as well as to protect others from harm.
- Water is a public trust. All Canadians have the right and the responsibility to be involved in the major decisions affecting water in Canada.



Contact Information

CUPE National

Water Watch toll-free line
 (English) 1-877-CUPE-H2O (1-877-287-3426)
 (French) 1-877-SCFP-EAU (1-877-723-7328)

E-mail waterwatch@cupe.ca
 Web www.cupe.ca

21 Florence Street
 Ottawa K2P 0W6
 Phone (613) 237-1590 Fax (613) 237-5508

Council of Canadians

E-mail inquiries@canadians.org
 Web www.canadians.org

502-151 Slater Street
 Ottawa K1P 5H3
 Phone (800) 387-7177
 Phone (613) 233-2773 Fax (613) 233-6776

Canadian Environmental Law Association

E-mail cela@web.net
 Web www.web.net/cela

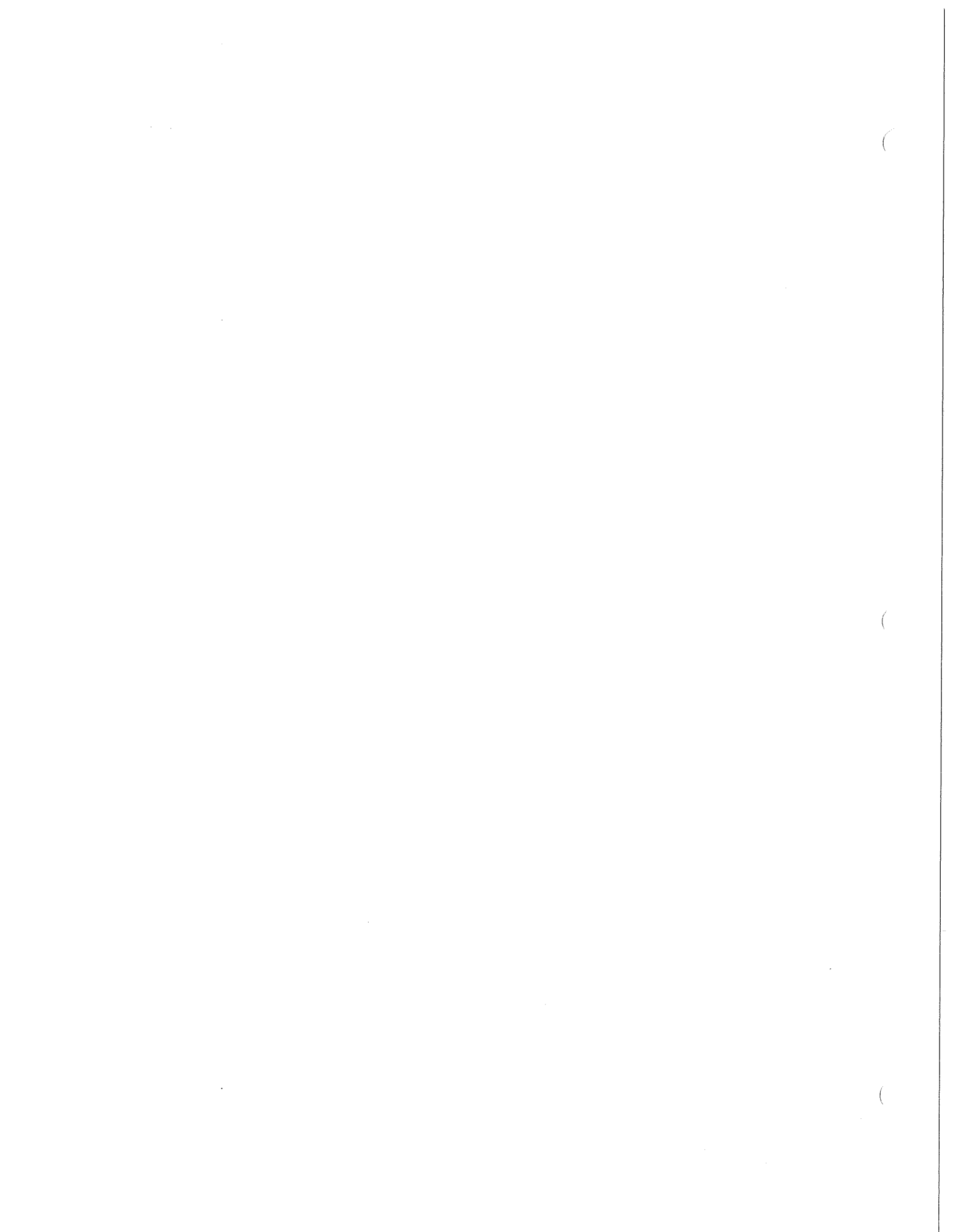
401-517 College Street
 Toronto M6G 4A2
 Phone (416) 960-2284 Fax (416) 960-9392

West Coast Environmental Law

E-mail admin@wcel.org
 Web www.wcel.org

1001-207 West Hastings Street
 Vancouver V6B 1H7
 Phone (604) 684-7378 Fax (604) 684-1312







FAXback

Please complete this form and fax it to CUPE National.



Please fax this form today to
(613) 237-5508

Or mail to
Water Watch
CUPE National
21 Florence Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0W6

Questions?

Call the Water Watch toll-free line at
1-877-CUPE-H2O
(1-877-287-3426)
or **1-877-SCFP-EAU**
(1-877-723-7328)

We've set up a Water Watch Committee!

Please send us _____ copies of the Water Watch Pamphlet.

CUPE Local _____

Community _____

Name of contact _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

E-mail _____

Mailing address _____

Other organizations involved _____

Our municipality currently:

- supports public control of water
- wants to privatize water services
- is undecided



