

**“Water: Life Before Profit!”**  
**Pastoral Letter for Ecumenical Water Campaign Launch**  
**October 6, 2005**

*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55: 10-11)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As Isaiah so eloquently teaches, God sustains us always and forever with life-giving waters. From Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River to this present day, Christians have recognized in water a symbol of God’s love for us – individually and for all of Creation.

Without water, we cannot live.

As leaders of the churches that are members of KAIROS, we invite you to celebrate and give thanks for water—God’s sacred gift—by joining an ecumenical campaign to urge our Canadian political leaders to safeguard this life-sustaining resource.

For generations, Canadians have enjoyed an abundance of clean water. We have begun also to experience the disasters that can happen when this resource is not properly managed. In Walkerton, Ontario, and North Battleford, Saskatchewan, communities have been devastated by polluted water. In British Columbia and Nova Scotia, unseasonable droughts have made people anxious about water supply. In Alberta and Manitoba, flood conditions have raised concerns about water management. In Quebec and Newfoundland, conflicts erupt over river management, hydro dams and Aboriginal rights.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, water is an issue of life and death. More than 1 billion people lack safe drinking water and sanitation services. Every 14 seconds, someone dies from diseases caused by contaminated water.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in 2002 and again in 2003, proposed that access to water for personal and domestic use is a human right. Indeed, water is a universal right for without it all animal and plant life withers and dies.

With heavy hearts, we observed Canada oppose the adoption of this motion. We note with alarm the increasing pressure on our governments to entrust management of our water systems to private corporations, and to permit profit-making exports of fresh water.

Assuring access to sufficient, clean water is at heart not so much a commercial matter as a moral and spiritual one. Any denial of access to water represents a lack of respect for God’s creation and lack of concern for basic human needs. It is vital that governance decisions concerning water be made according to the criteria of equity, sustainability and meaningful community participation. This can only happen through public control of water for the common good.

We call you to action. On a personal level, we urge you to respect and conserve water so that it remains free of pollution and available for use by all our brothers and sisters.

We also urge you to join the Education and Action Campaign **“Water: Life Before Profit!”** which is being sponsored by our Churches through KAIROS and by the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. Through them, you will learn more about this urgent concern.

We welcome you into this campaign of witness to God’s love for all Creation.



Most Reverend André Gaumont,  
Archbishop of Sherbrooke  
President, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops



Wayne DeJong,  
Director, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee



Peter Short,  
Moderator, The United Church of Canada



Raymond L. Schultz,  
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada



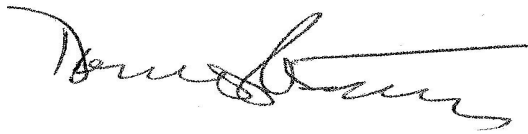
The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison  
Archbishop and Primate  
The Anglican Church of Canada



M. Jean Morris,  
Moderator, 131st General Assembly  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada



Jane Orion Smith  
for Beverly Shepard,  
Clerk, Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



Donald Peters,  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee Canada