



Blue Community Newsletter

FEDERAL ELECTION FOCUS

October, 2019

WHY A BLUE COMMUNITY?

- We have neighbours without access to clean drinking water.
- The growth of bottled water use in society commodifies creation.
- The risks of water privatization grow without greater public investment.
- Too many people are disconnected from the sacred waterways that enrich their lives.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Support political leaders who share our Blue Community principles and will act upon them.
- Reconnect with our watersheds as sources of life, not just resources.
- Reconcile our relations with the lands and waters and the Indigenous nations who continue to protect them.
- Support existing efforts to protect water as a shared commons and sacred gift.
- Examine and change our personal choices that pollute and privatize water.

With the Federal Election coming October 21, let's take a look at what water promises are being made to Ontario voters.

In an 8,000 word Maclean's magazine summary of where the parties stand on all the issues, water was mentioned only 14 times, rivers 0, lakes 0, trees 3, and fish 0 times. When it comes to environmental issues this year, climate change and energy projects occupy much of the focus. For this Blue Community project, we've looked protected places, pollution sources, plastics, access to safe drinking water, and the various ways we can collectively protect water for all life and for the future.

In a Canada Votes CBC special called "How do the main parties compare on these issues?" water and the environment were not the focus for any of the 19 categories. While climate breakdown and pipeline issues impact water, there is no comparisons on clean, accessible, and protected waters. Here are a few exceptions.

Many of Canada's largest environment NGOs created survey for checking which parties were a "Yes", "Partial", or "No" on 10 key questions. # 9 was:

Will you create a Federal Environmental Bill of Rights that formally recognizes the legal right to a healthy environment?

Yes: NDP and Greens

Partial: Liberal

No: Conservative

The chronic gap in drinking water access for First Nations across Canada is one of the few water issues that all four Ontario parties agree on. All want to end long-term DWAs by 2021. However, only the Conservatives say "No" to question 10 from the above survey:

Will you uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the protection of Indigenous and treaty rights?



TYPES OF ACTIONS WE CAN MAKE

- Support existing efforts to protect water as a shared commons, human right, and sacred gift.
- Reflect on your water impacts through daily choices and intentions.
- Start a conversation with someone about their responsibilities to water.

ACTION EXAMPLES

- Wellington Water Watchers in Guelph Ontario, needs help teaching Canadians about the negative impacts of bottled water and putting limits on this industry.
- The Council of Canadians are researching and holding the Federal government accountable on the promise to end Drinking Water Advisories. Learn and support their work.
- A network of Blue Communities across Canada is affirming public control of water systems. Can your City be added to this network?
- Visit the website for more: www.BlueCommunityCSJ.org

DIRECT FROM THEIR PLATFORMS

LIBERAL PARTY

To ensure that Canada is better prepared to protect and manage our fresh water in a changing climate, we will move forward with a new Canada Water Agency. The Agency will work together with the provinces and territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists, and others to find the best ways to keep our water safe, clean, and well-managed.

To protect more of Canada for our kids and grandkids to enjoy, we will move forward with an ambitious plan to conserve 25 per cent of Canada's land and 25 per cent of Canada's oceans by 2025, working toward 30 per cent in each by 2030.

To reduce plastic pollution, we are taking steps to ban harmful single-use plastics. This builds on our existing ban on products with plastic microbeads, which threaten the health of our lakes, oceans, and wildlife. We will also move forward with new standards and targets for businesses that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging, to make sure they take full responsibility for collecting and recycling their plastic waste.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

A full public platform has not been released as of October 10th, but their environment plan is available and states:

- Work with provinces and municipalities to bring an end to raw sewage dumps into marine or freshwater ecosystems.
- Maintain support for watershed protection in significant watersheds, including the Great Lakes and Lake Winnipeg, and restore the Lake Simcoe Clean-Up Fund.
- Pursue natural infrastructure projects that leverage the resilience of our natural landscapes.
- Support the completion of the Canadian Wetland Inventory. This will cost \$15 million over three years.
- Ban the export of plastics waste unless it can be shown that it will be recycled at its destination and impose tough penalties for violations.

NDP PARTY

We will protect 30% of our land, freshwater, and oceans by 2030 and back those protections with funding and enforcement. A New Democrat government will implement a national freshwater strategy and work with the provinces and territories to protect our waterways under international agreements.

Continued on the next page.



STORY OF PLASTIC

Connected to the health of the waters, our own waterbodies, and the issue of single-use bottled water, a new film by the Story of Stuff project is about to be released.

"The film exposes the flawed and failed prophecy of recycling, which works well for glass and metals but fails miserably at dealing with plastics. Only 14 percent of plastics are recycled and only 2 percent effectively, the film explains. Most plastics degrade when recycled and don't end up made into something as useful the second time around.

Heaps of useless plastic are then shipped abroad to countries like China, Indonesia and India, where much of it ends up polluting waterways and endangering drinking water and wildlife. Or it's burned next to communities and farms. Local people are left to deal with the health implications – respiratory problems, skin rashes, shorter life expectancy, cancer."

by Tara Lohan, *The Revelator* article
<https://therevelator.org/story-plastic-review/>

The Story of Plastic is currently making its way to film festivals. Find/host a local screening by visiting the website:

<https://www.storyofplastic.org/>

FROM ELECTION PLATFORMS

NDP PARTY

To reduce waste in our landfills and communities, a New Democrat government will ban single-use plastics across Canada, and hold companies responsible for the entire lifecycle of their plastics products and packaging. We'll help municipalities improve their waste management and recycling programs.

From the recent news:

An NDP government would immediately spend \$19 million to fund a mercury poisoning treatment centre for Grassy Narrows First Nation and the 1.8 billion required to ensure clean drinking water. This community is downstream from the Dryden mill, one of Canada's most notorious toxic dumping sites and hasn't had safe drinking water since the 1960's.

GREEN PARTY

No new pipelines, or coal, oil or gas drilling or mining, including offshore wells, will be approved. Existing oil and gas operations will continue on a declining basis, with bitumen production phased out between 2030 and 2035. Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations will be banned outright due to impacts on groundwater quality, methane release and seismic activity

Direct the Canada Infrastructure Bank, revamped to exclude private profit in infrastructure, to invest in climate-proofing essential infrastructure, prioritizing upgrades to drinking water and waste water systems to protect against flooding, droughts and contamination.

Renew the national Environmental Farm Plan Program to help farmers protect wildlife habitat areas and marginal lands, maintain water quality in streams, lakes and aquifers, and retain and improve soil quality, increase carbon sequestration and decrease water requirements.

In collaboration with provinces, territories, municipal/local governments and Indigenous Peoples, develop a national water strategy to ensure safe drinking water for all Canadians.

By January 2022, ban the production, distribution and sale of all unnecessary or non-essential petroleum-based single-use plastics. Extend the ban on microbeads to include household and industrial cleaning products.

Expand marine protected areas from 10 to 30 per cent of Canada's territorial waters by 2030.

WATER IS LIFE SUMMIT

On September 28th, over 130 people traveled from parts of Michigan and Ontario to learn about water injustices from across the Great Lakes region and to unite for solutions.

There were many honourable speakers at this London event including Lela George (Oneida Nation of the Thames) and Maude Barlow (Council of Canadians). Lela co-presented with Paul Baines at the London house when showcasing the Blue Community project for Sisters, Staff, and Associates in the fall of 2018.

Maude spoke about her new book 'Whose Water is it Anyway' in London and at a packed house in Toronto (FYI our project is mentioned in the book). For both events, our 'Water is the First Medicine' posters were picked up as well as our 250 buttons celebrating water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift.

For more visit the Water Is Life Alliance website:
<https://waterislifealliance.net>

WHAT IS NEW ?

There are 3 new blog posts up on the website. Please read, comment, and share:

I Am Water: introduce yourself with water
Going International To Stop Nestlé Locally
Indigenous Legal Systems to Protect Water

Just in time for Thanksgiving, here are some teachings from what Robin Wall Kimmerer calls 'The Honourable Harvest':

Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek.
Abide by the answer.

Never take the first. Never take the last.
Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.

Take only what you need and leave some for others.
Use everything that you take.

Take only that which is given to you.
Share it, as the Earth has shared with you.
Be grateful.

Reciprocate the gift.

Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the Earth will last forever.

from:

<https://ojibiikaan.com/event/a-teaching-about-honourable-harvest-by-robin-wall-kimmerer>

