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CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR
**Development
and Peace**

Tuesday, 15 March 2005

Honourable Councillors:

We are here today to solicit the support of HRM Council for the Water Declaration of the CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. Fifty-one city or regional councils, and more than 200,000 Canadians, have already signed this declaration.

We are aware that Regional Council is directly responsible for treating and supplying drinking water within its territory and manages all the related water services from pumping stations to local sewers. We also know that water multinationals offer their resources to cities when proposing the privatization of water systems.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is the official international development agency of the Catholic Church in Canada. It was set up in 1967 by the bishops of Canada so as to help the poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE does this by raising money for community projects in the global south and by doing educational work on global issues here at home. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE also plays a key role in emergency relief such as the recent tidal wave in South East Asia.

The theme for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE 's 2003-2006 Education Program here in Canada is: "**Water: Life before Profit**". God has created a world rich in resources. Prime among them is water, essential to all life. Yet more than 1 billion people, the majority of them living in Asia, Africa and Latin America, do not have access to clean drinking water. One hundred percent of Canadians living in urban areas have access to clean water. This figure is 99 per cent for rural Canada. Compare this to Afghanistan where only 19 per cent of urban residents and 11 per cent of rural residents have access to clean water (World Health Organization).

Privatization of water services is being offered as a solution to the problem of access to water. Multi-national companies are being contracted in many cities around the world to take over water systems in the hopes that they can provide better service. Privatization has produced only one sure result: rapidly escalating fees.

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- in South Africa, 10 million people lost water services because they could not pay;
- in Ghana, water prices increased by 95%. After privatization 70% of health clinic visits were for water-borne diseases;
- in Cochabamba, Bolivia, water fees increased by up to 400%; the people revolted and now Bechtel Corporation is suing Bolivia for \$25 million U.S. in lost profits;
- in Manila, Philippines, 2 million people now depend on broken water pipes and dirty water;
- Everywhere, water companies prefer to service wealthier neighbourhoods while neglecting slums and rural areas.

Responsible stewardship of water can best be achieved through democratic, public control, involving the people most affected by the decisions. Tony Clarke, in his book "Blue Gold", writes: "Every person in the world has a right to clean water and healthy sanitation systems no matter where they live. This right is best protected by keeping water and sewage services in the public sector, regulating the protection of water supplies, and promoting the efficient use of water. This is the only way to preserve adequate water supplies of clean water for people in water scarce regions." (p. 225)

In Porto Alegre, Brazil, the water system is both democratically-run and profitable. A board with citizen representatives from all parts of society governs the system with the result that water rates for the poor are affordable and all profits are used to improve the service. In Santa Cruz, Bolivia, the water service is a legal co-operative, and, as such, its profits must be reinvested in the service it provides. Its users are involved in its decision-making structure and its fee structure guarantees access to drinking water for all users.

Clearly, **where governments and citizens lose control of water resources and services, poor families' access to clean water is jeopardized.** Our partner in El Salvador, the Consumer Protection Centre, tells us that what is happening in the South can happen here; **no country in the world is safe from the privatization of its common wealth.** This is why we are asking you to support the **Water Declaration** by passing the attached resolution, which is based on the following principles:

- . **Water is a sacred gift that connects all life;**
- . **Access to clean water is a basic human right;**
- . **The value of the Earth's fresh water to the common good takes priority over any possible commercial value;**
- . **Fresh water is a shared legacy, a public trust and a collective responsibility.**

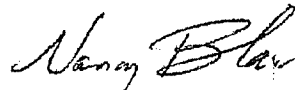
We would very much appreciate a favourable response to our request, and ask that a motion of approval be presented for the support of the full Regional Council. We would also appreciate it if the extract from the Minutes be forwarded to my office at:

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Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make this presentation. We would be delighted to address any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely



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On behalf of the Halifax Diocesan Council.