



**2010 FRESHWATER YOUTH SUMMIT
COMMUNIQUÉ**

**June 1 and 2, 2010
Nipissing University
Bracebridge, Ontario**

2010 Freshwater Youth Summit Communiqué

This is a call to action on behalf of the Youth of the 2010 Freshwater Summit for the Canadian government, all world leaders (particularly those leaders in the G8), and for all citizens to recognize their individual responsibilities in relation to water. We are not living in the world that you were raised in – this is a world that we, your children and grandchildren, are inheriting. Lead us in our concerted effort to do what is right for the water of the world for our children and grandchildren.

We, 36 youth from Parry Sound and Muskoka Districts, Simcoe County and Halton Region, gathered at the 2010 Freshwater Summit to educate ourselves, listen to six speakers, and discuss current freshwater issues. We strongly believe that, in Canada and in other countries, we can no longer take water for granted.

Water is fundamental; humans, plants, animals and ecosystems need sufficient water in order to survive. Every living thing deserves access to a sufficient quality and quantity of water to sustain life. As such, we propose that water should be managed as a public trust and that water should be a human right regardless of financial standing. National governments and the United Nations should recognize water as a human right and are therefore encouraged to adopt the upcoming proposal of a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth which would ensure the rights of ecological systems. We as humans have the responsibility to ensure that these rights are protected.

As Canadians, we request that the Canadian government immediately establish a National Freshwater Policy that includes clear regulations and targets, steps for immediate and long term protection and conservation, and an educational strategy to advise our citizens and encourage participation.

A National Water Policy must be established. As such, we believe that a national hierarchical network of water committees should be established to enforce a National Water Policy and to regulate and maintain this Policy thereafter. These committees should be from each province and territory and should include all stakeholders (members of the scientific community, First Nations, community citizens), as well as representatives from each watershed. Once established, public meetings should be held to help educate the public, receive their input, and allow them an opportunity to ask questions about the Policy.

It is our recommendation that in the National Water Policy, the following issues be addressed.

Protection

Due to the scarcity and increasing demands on freshwater resources, we believe that it's our responsibility to protect drinking water sources.

We believe that money should be allocated to assess, research, and monitor freshwater resources to help establish a national standard for drinking water.

A fully funded committee for the protection of biodiversity should be founded. Funds should be allocated to water infrastructure in order to upgrade, maintain, and increase efficiency, as well as to clean up bodies of polluted water. Community committees should also be able to apply for grants in order to improve the local quality of water.

Water should be returned to the environment from all uses in the same or better state as it was prior to use. When used water is not returned in an acceptable state, those responsible should be required to cover the costs of ecosystem restoration, including the biodiversity, health, and economic consequences of this pollution. Furthermore, in order to prevent pollution whether individual or industrial, we believe that fines should be issued based on the severity of the offence. Water protection laws must be enforced.

Conservation

In order to meet the water demands of future generations, steps must be taken to preserve and conserve the resources that currently exist. This can be done by committing additional resources for research, new standards for water use and planned land use. Research needs to be conducted on a regular basis to determine how our actions are affecting the ecosystems around us. We need to ensure that our ecosystems are balanced, sustained, and protected.

Studies must be conducted to determine new standards for household and industrial use. This should be metered and monitored in order to make recommendations on how to further reduce water usage. Additional incentives should be offered to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies that reduce water consumption. One such incentive could include the use of grey water as a resource instead of treating it as a waste.

To reduce transportation of water, increasing emphasis should be placed on the use of local resources. Furthermore, the effects on, and the availability of water should be considered when planning for land use i.e. agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial growth.

Education

An educated public will support and practice effective water policies. They will become water ambassadors and guardians for freshwater policy.

Implement public awareness campaigns with the goal of educating the public on water usage, protection and conservation to encourage sustainability. Water sustainability programs should begin in elementary school and continue throughout the secondary grades.

The knowledge that developed countries have relating to water treatment and management should be *freely* shared with developing countries.

We, the future decision-makers, believe that a National Water Policy would ensure a good quality and quantity of water for our children and grandchildren. We are the ones who will be feeling the effects of the decisions that are made today. Thank you for taking into account our carefully considered recommendations. We look forward to your published steps to action.