



What's the issue?

The United Nations has said clean water is a right. The 1971 Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) aimed to reduce the flow of toxic substances into the environment, with enforcement power given to the provinces. Yet in Canada water regulation has been ineffective.

Some challenges

Industrial contaminants: Pharmaceutical, mining, and lumbering industries draw huge amounts of water and contaminate it.

Run-offs after rain: Blue-green algae develops when agricultural fertilizer runs off of farms into lakes after it rains, or when human and animal wastes are forced into the lakes during rain storms. Its presence is a growing problem in Ontario.

The destruction of our wetlands: The degradation of nature's filtering system allows algae blooms to spread in the upper layer of the water. The green appearance is caused by an explosion of the algae known as cyanobacteria, which release toxins damaging to human health. As the bloom continues to grow, a scum forms and oxygen is stripped from the water, killing off all living organisms and creating a "dead zone." Toxin concentrations increase as lake levels drop; in Ontario, this is at the greatest level in Lake Erie.

Well water: One-third of Canadians depend on groundwater (well water). This water can be contaminated by landfill leaking, septic tanks, chemical runoff and industrial waste sites. Some contaminants stay in the system for 10,000 years.

For more information: The Council of Canadians – Water Campaign www.canadians.org/water

Clean water is a right, yet in Canada water regulation has been ineffective.

Questions

- 1 What is your government willing to do to combat contamination of our water supplies and lakes?
- 2 How will your party deal with the issue of granting groundwater rights to bottling companies?
- 3 What changes are needed to create a water policy that is effective, enforced and properly funded?