

## **PUBLIC/PRIVATE/PARTNERSHIPS – THE WRONG MODEL**

### ***Statement by the Council of Canadians to the Secretariat of the Third World Water Forum.***

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The Public Private Partnership (PPP) thematic session of the Third World Water Forum has ended with no common statement by the co-convenors, The Council of Canadians and The World Water Council. The Council of Canadians and our civil society allies believe that while there may be a collective understanding of the problem, we fundamentally disagree with those who advocate privatization as the solution.

On one side are the large water corporations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Water Council and some powerful First World governments. They are promoting PPPs, whereby governments and international financial institutions, using public monies, fund the delivery of water by private companies on a for-profit, full cost-recovery basis.

On the other side is a growing civil society movement backed by human rights and anti-poverty activists, environmentalists, public sector workers and their unions, indigenous peoples, family farmers, small fishers, anti-dam groups and threatened communities, who are opposed to the commodification of water and to the model of PPPs for the delivery of water services.

PPPs are necessary for the corporate control of water. Private companies are guaranteed a profit from public funds even when their practices are corrupt and quality deteriorates. Even where corruption is non-existent and quality is maintained, PPPs are the wrong model because public funds line the pockets of private investors rather than reclaim fouled waters, build infrastructure or guarantee water for all.

The commodification of water is wrong - ethically, environmentally, and socially. It ensures decisions centre on commercial, not environmental or social, considerations. The principles become those of scarcity and profit maximization rather than conservation or long-term sustainability. Increased profits become dependent on increased consumption rather than conservation. This exacerbates rather than alleviates the problem.

The rising power of water transnationals has reduced the power of citizens and local communities to control their own water sources. Corporate lobby groups have undue influence with governments and international trade and financial institutions where they seek financial and regulatory guarantees as well as lower environmental standards. PPPs are an important step toward the commodification and cartelization of the world's water in the hands of a small elite who will determine the future in its own interest. In such a scenario, water will go to those who can afford it and not to those who need it or to other species. The result will be ecological devastation and the death of millions, perhaps billions, of people.

The global civil society delegation demands that governments act to ensure citizens can exercise their recognized human right to water and that there be universal exemptions for water from all trade agreements. Until then we commit to continuing to challenge and fight privatization and commodification of water everywhere. We also call for the World Water Council to be disbanded in favour of a truly representative body that can legitimately claim to be working toward water for all.