

December 2022

CSJ Blue Community Updates and Invites

Here is our latest summary of news and invitations to protect water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift. If you have any news to share or are interested in specific themes or issues, please contact the Program Manager:

Paul Baines (info@bluecommunitycsj.org)

Consider forwarding this email to a friend or printing it off to place on coffee tables and put up on bulletin boards for those preferring paper copies of this newsletter.



NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Looking for your feedback about this Blue Community newsletter

In an effort to better meet the needs of our readers – people like you – [this survey was designed to gather your feedback](#). Please share your thoughts by the end of 2022 so we update our approach for the year ahead.

TWO NEW BLOG POSTS

Safe Drinking Water For All: status update

20 years after the Walkerton water crisis which left 7 people dead and 2,300 ill, the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CEL) has written a 100-page report to evaluate the implementation of the Inquiry's 121 recommendations. One of the key CEL findings was:

While about 80 percent of the provincial population receives their drinking water from municipal water systems, which are closely regulated, other parts of the population — mainly small and remote communities, Indigenous communities, and those who obtain their water from private wells — do not receive these protections. This bifurcated approach is inequitable, unacceptable, and endangers the health of excluded populations.

Our new blog post summarizes the report and pays special attention to issues affecting those who live near farms, get their water from a private well, or live on a First Nations reserve.

[Read the full post to learn how your drinking is protected \(or not\).](#)

Conservation Without Authority: Bill 23

Recently the Ontario government introduced and has since passed Bill 23 (More Homes Built Faster Act) to build 1.5 million new homes in southern Ontario. The Bill is activating widespread resistance from a newly formed coalition of environmentalists, labour unions, farmers, housing advocates, and more. In a joint statement signed by more than 125 organizations and 100 people, the statement outlines how the Bill will not create more housing, but instead encourage urban sprawl and undermine environmental protections. [Read the full post](#) to learn more about the role of Conservation Authorities in protecting waterways and forests and the ongoing efforts to lessen the harm of this Bill.

EVENTS

POSTPONED – Watershed 2022: digital rally for water justice

Because of the widespread damage that Bill 23 is set to do in Ontario, this event has been postponed. The event organizers have limited capacity, so they will work to limit the impacts of Bill 23 and then return to their Watershed rally in 2023. [Check here for a new date in the new year.](#)

RECORDING – The Waves of Change

On October 1, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto and their Ministry for Social Justice, Peace, and Creation Care welcomed Maude Barlow to share her insights for wise hope and realistic action at this in-person event in Toronto. Maude is an author and activist, a founding member of the Council of Canadians, and the founder of the Blue Planet Project. Earlier this year, she published her new book: *Still Hopeful: Lessons From a Lifetime of Activism*. [Watch Maude outline the local and global water crisis and the efforts of hope.](#)

NEWS

Water and Sanitation Prominent on COP27 Agenda

During the COP27 conference in Egypt, the link between global warming and water has been included on the agenda for the first time.

Bishop Arnold Temple, president of the All Africa Conference of Churches and outgoing chair of WCC Ecumenical Water Network, underlined the importance of a justice and human rights approach to these discussions around water and climate. He said, “water is a gift of God, a public good, and a human right. Thus to address the challenges of climate change, we must not promote the privatization of water as a solution. Water must remain in the control of the public, while private actors are most welcome to provide innovation, technology, and finance.”

[Read the full article.](#)

Life on the Line: development in the Ring of Fire

Ontario Premier Doug Ford has made his intentions clear about opening up the Ring of Fire for development, and big players in the mining and electric vehicle (EV) industries are circling. Staring down plans that threaten to forever change the way of life for his community and thousands of other Indigenous people in the area, Chief Moonias makes a promise: “Our people will have a say in what goes on in our traditional lands and our river system, and we have not given our free, prior or informed consent.” [Read the full article with vivid photos of people living with the land and waters.](#)

Nuclear Waste Site Selectors Delay Announcement Until 2024

The site selectors for a proposed underground nuclear waste repository in Ontario say they won't make a decision on a preferred location until the fall of 2024. Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation-Ignace area, an hour's drive east of Dryden, in northwestern Ontario and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation-South Bruce area in southern Ontario are the two communities on the short list to host the deep geological repository. Last week, 49 chiefs of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) passed a resolution at their annual conference in Timmins opposing plans to haul and store nuclear waste in the region. [Read the full article.](#)

The Human Right to Water in South Africa

Post-apartheid South Africa is struggling to keep water as a human right because of failed policies that monetize water, often in the name of conservation. In 2001, South Africa adopted a Free Basic Water (FBW) program to allocate 6,000 liters of water per household per month. For comparison, the average person in Canada uses 250 liters of water per day. So a household of 4 would consume 30,000 liters of water every month.

The FBW program is undermined mainly by the under-investment of water infrastructure by municipalities. Because state policies incentivize fiscal prudence and market values, the needs of society's most vulnerable are not met. In fact, restrictions on water access have led to increased divisions between the rich and poor. [Read the full article.](#)

Alternative Federal Budget 2022

Led by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, this project is a collaboration among organizations and researchers from a variety of sectors, populations, and areas of expertise including human rights, labour, environmental protection, anti-poverty, arts and culture, social development, child development, international development, women, Indigenous peoples, the faith-based community, students, teachers, education, and health care workers. From the section on water:

We have built infrastructure to provide clean drinking water, sewage and stormwater management, electricity production and promote countless economic activities. Many Canadian cities still rely on water pipes laid over a century ago. All infrastructure requires ongoing investment to continue to function as designed. Unfortunately, governments at all levels in Canada have tended to ignore these requirements, resulting in massive backlogs and deficits for maintenance. [See the full report.](#)

UNDRIP 15 Years On: genuine truth and reconciliation requires legislative reform

This past September marked the anniversary of the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Fifteen years ago, the UN General Assembly adopted the declaration that serves as the global minimum standard “for the survival, dignity and well-being” of all Indigenous Peoples. Canada adopted UNDRIP nine years later in 2016.

The vast majority of Canada’s laws were written without the participation of Indigenous Peoples and with little regard for their rights. In fact, many laws, such as the Indian Act, were specifically designed to dispossess Indigenous Peoples, curtail their rights and criminalize their cultures and traditions. Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and former senator, has talked about the “war of law” that Canada has waged against Indigenous Peoples. [Read the full article.](#)

WATCH

Büdaajwan Force of Water Documentary

Nipissing First Nation has made a loving tribute documentary of Muriel Sawyerban – a language warrior and the fire she lit in the Nipissing community. Watch how the

Anishinaabemowin language connects people to the land and the waters of the Great Lakes.

[View the 50 minute documentary.](#)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

One of the reasons commodified bottled water has become more normalized, is that people do not trust the quality of their tap water. While tap water is tested more for quality than bottled water, perhaps people look around at local water pollution and get turned off of their household tap. How much do you trust the quality of your tap water and what information or policy changes would help strengthen this trust?

Bill 23 uses the current housing crisis as an opportunity to ‘develop’ more land in southern Ontario. What strategies are being used (or still need to be used) to unite more groups dedicated to affordable housing AND healthy and interconnected ecosystems to make a political impact?

The Ring of Fire mineral deposit in Northern Ontario opens up a conversation about the proposed need for minerals and a ‘green’ economy using electric vehicles and the need to respect Indigenous rights and livelihood that are interconnected to the health of land and waters. What parts of this conversation interest you the most and why?

If you live in Ontario, what is the name of your watershed Conservation Authority? What can you do to learn more about and support their work?



We also have a [Facebook page](#) for this work. Every week there are new posts for you to see and share. To contact Paul Baines email: info@BlueCommunityCSJ.org

Past and present news updates and more can be found on our
CSJ Blue Community website: BlueCommunityCSJ.org