

## Resolution

### Retaining Strong Public Control of Water and Wastewater Services and Resources in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River

WHEREAS, Great Lakes United has continued to work to conserve, protect and sustain Great Lakes water resources with strong public policies and laws, and

WHEREAS, many Great Lakes municipalities are being asked to enter into private or public-private contracts for water and wastewater services and facilities with; large multi-national domestic water companies, water companies from France and Britain, multi-national engineering firms, as well as oil and gas pipeline companies, and

WHEREAS, the experience of privatization in Britain has had damaging consequences for the public and the environment including:

- \* Discrimination against the poor unable to afford large rate increases by disconnecting them from water and requiring them to pay in advance for water use,
- \* Health risks from increases in dysentery and hepatitis,
- \* Increases in water wastage and leakage caused by failure to invest revenues in infrastructure maintenance and repair,
- \* Increases in water pollution violations,
- \* Aggravation of drought conditions and depletion of water reservoirs and aquatic habitat making tankering of water over great distances necessary, and

WHEREAS, private and public-private arrangements diminish public accountability and control and create conflicts between shareholder interests and public interest, and

WHEREAS, it is the practice of water companies to use consumer revenues to diversify into new markets or to finance other ventures like; mergers and takeovers, high executive salaries and shareholder dividends, and

WHEREAS, water and wastewater services are virtual monopolies that need strong regulation to protect consumers and many private contracts are being let without the benefit of oversight, scrutiny by a regulator or public participation, and

WHEREAS, many of the companies seeking control of water and wastewater contracts in the Great Lakes are proponents of large North American water schemes which include diversions from the Great Lakes, and

WHEREAS, promotional literature of the new global water industry

indicates that there billions of dollars of profit to be captured in the next millennium in North American water markets, and

WHEREAS, scientists are forecasting continental water shortages in North America from depletion of major groundwater aquifers and climate change impacts, and

WHEREAS, the further entrenchment of water as a commodity as defined by the Canada - U.S. free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement could be used in attempts to trigger provisions of those agreements which could result in permanent diversions from the Great Lakes, and

WHEREAS, alternatives to privatization and public-private partnership agreements to reduce costs and improve service while maintaining public control such as water conservation and efficiency measures, appropriate land-use planning and sustainable watershed development and full cost pricing are being abandoned by governments, and

WHEREAS, water and wastewater plants in the Great Lakes are in need of strong public investments in improvements to make them state-of-the-art and non-polluting, and

WHEREAS, in Ontario provincial legal requirements for a public referendum on the sale of a public utility has been suppressed by a new law allowing those sales, and

WHEREAS, a private company is seeking to export water by tanker (1 percent of the flows) from the Manicouagan River a tributary of the St. Lawrence River, and

WHEREAS, private water companies are also capturing unregulated bottled water markets causing groundwater depletion and conflict in some areas of the watershed in Ontario and Quebec,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Great Lakes United call upon all Great Lakes governments to propagate strong laws and programs to keep water and wastewater services and facilities in public control.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Great Lakes United continue to collect resource materials on the experience of privatization and disseminate those materials to concerned communities, municipal councils and workers in water and wastewater facilities.

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED, that Great Lakes United continue to work to promote alternatives to privatization contained in their report The Fate of the Great Lakes -- Sustaining or Draining the Sweetwater Seas?, particularly their goal of a 50 percent reduction in water use by 2005.

Submitted by The Canadian Environmental Law Association and la Société pour Vaincre la Pollution