

Civic Works Committee of City of London

We are requesting delegation status to present the Blue Community project/movement to the Civic Works Committee ideally at the November 2020 meeting.

Attached please find a letter of Information regarding Blue Community including the three resolutions required for a municipality to become a Blue Community. We hope you will find that the resolutions are very much aligned with present practices in London and do not impose costs or changes in operations.

Also imbedded in the letter are letters of support and references to petitions showing community support for this designation that signals a community mindful of protecting its water for public need. We could all use good news

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Lynn Brown,
Chair, Blue Community Committee
London Chapter of Council of Canadians.

Mayor Holder and Civic Works Committee:

Becoming a Blue Community involves a municipality making three resolutions which enshrine water as a common resource, essential for life, and making it a public trust with public interests having priority over private for profit interests.

HISTORY of Blue Community presentations to the City of London

The request for consideration that London become a Blue Community was presented May 2, 2018 to the Citizens Advisory Committee on the Environment. Accepted, it was then presented to the Civic Works Committee March 18, 2019. The motion failed due to concerns we hope to allay at this time.

Blue Community was again presented to ACE March 4, 2020 and again accepted.

HISTORY of Blue Community movement

The Blue Community movement was originated in Canada in 2009, a joint vision of the Council of Canadians, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Eau Secours, and the Blue Planet Project. There are now 76 Blue Communities on the globe, forty-six in Canada. A growing number in 2020 despite the pandemic.

THE THREE RESOLUTIONS

Resolution One – Please see another form of the resolution included, document 01.

The City resolves, recognizes and affirms that water and sanitation services are human rights. The City resolves that it will refrain from shutting off water and wastewater services in any residence where residents have an inability to pay their bills and the City will make every effort to work with the resident to remediate the debt.

This resolution was a concern when last considered by the CWC lest it lead to a rise in unpaid bills. Firstly, the City had in place a longstanding mechanism to assist those genuinely unable to pay water bills through London Hydro and the Salvation Army's Housing Stability Program. In addition, it is important to note that water shutoffs in Canada are rare and in Quebec and BC do not happen. No Blue Community has lost its designation due to decisions to cut off water.

In recent talks with London City staff we understand this resolution would not affect London's operations.

Resolution Two – Please see the resolution as reworded by the City Water Engineering Department, document 02.

This resolution recommits the City to not selling single use plastic bottled water at City facilities and events. It is a reaffirmation of a decision made by London City Council in 2008. Progressive at that time, the City has made accommodations to meet the public's need for water. The rewording is seen as in keeping with the values of the Blue Community by the national office of the Council of Canadians.

The waste, health and environmental problems created by single use bottled water are well known and will not be restated unless needed by the committee.

Resolution Three – Please see document 03, the resolution re promotion of public ownership and operation of water and wastewater services.

Also, please see document 04, describing some history of the dangers of privatizing such essential public services.

The City of London would oppose privatization in any form of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure and services, including through P3's or short-term service contracts, and resolve to keep these services publicly financed, owned, operated and managed.

It is important to be aware of the 2014 study by the Ontario Auditor General who looked at 70

plus P3's (public private partnerships) and found they were on average 30% more expensive than had they been publicly financed and operated. Not to mention the loss of public accountability, higher rates, loss of control for elected officials, etc. that mark the history of private interests controlling essential public services.

London already meets this standard and London's relationship with the Joint Board of the Water Supply System is again in keeping with the spirit of being a Blue Community.

London is poised to become a Blue Community and to have credit for present practices and their underlying values. Formalizing these commitments by making these resolutions allows London to join the network of Blue Communities in Canada and around the globe. Please see document 05 showing the present list of Blue Communities.

Note please, the Sisters of St. Joseph within our city limits and other communities nearby, i.e. Bayfield, St. Catherines, etc., and larger cities, i.e. Vancouver, Paris, Berlin.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Please see document 06, the petition asking London to become a Blue Community. There are 377 physical signatures (ended due social distancing realities). The petition is now online. The numbers will be reported at the time of presentation.

We also include letters of support from the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph (document 07) and the Urban League of London (document 08).

CONCLUSION

We ask the committee to make these resolutions and join the movement of Blue Communities. London is a progressive city and these resolutions are in keeping with the vision that includes acknowledging housing as a human right and that there is a climate emergency. London is essentially in alignment with the values of Blue Community and can join other communities in enshrining water as a human right with safe guards for the public needs.

Water is life.

Lynn Brown, Chair

Blue Communities London

London Chapter of the Council of Canadians

DOCUMENT 01

RESOLUTION AFFIRMING WATER AND SANITATION AS HUMAN RIGHTS

Whereas the United Nations declared water and sanitation as human rights in 2010 and in 2011 called upon governments to take concrete action by developing plans of action and ensuring affordable services for everyone and

Whereas recognizing water and sanitation is one of the three steps needed to declare London a Blue Community:

Be it resolved that London recognizes and affirms that water and sanitation services are fundamental human rights. This means:

London will apply a human rights framework to its application of applicable by laws and will refrain from shutting off water and wastewater services in any residence where residents have an inability to pay their bills, and furthermore that London will make every effort to work with the resident to remediate the debt.

DOCUMENT 02

Resolution to phase out or ban the sale of single use plastic bottled water at municipal facilities and events.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF LONDON reaffirms its commitment to the existing bottled water sale restrictions in place for its municipal facilities and municipal events. It being noted that on August 18, 2008 City Council resolved:

- Single-use bottled water will no longer be sold in the City Hall cafeteria, from City-owned or City administered concessions and vending machines in public facilities where easy access to municipal tap water exists;
- single-use bottled water will no longer be purchased and provided at meetings where easy access to municipal tap water exists;
- the availability of water jugs with municipal tap water will be increased, where required.

This resolution wording has been viewed by the Council of Canadians and found to meet the spirit of the Blue Community resolution. It then is a straight forward reaffirmation of a progressive decision made by the City in 2008.

DOCUMENT 03

RESOLUTION TO PROMOTE PUBLICLY FINANCED AND OWNED AND OPERATED
WATER AND WASTE WATER SERVICES

Whereas public health depends on equitable access to drinking water and sanitation systems;
Whereas the City of London Ontario is committed to protecting water and wastewater systems from the consequences of privatization through “public-private partnerships” or P3’s, including:

- lack of transparency and public accountability;
- increased costs;
- higher user fees;
- multi-decade contracts that limit the policy options of future local governments; and
- international trade deals providing private water companies with rights to sue municipalities that bring water services into public hands;

Whereas the privatization of municipal water and wastewater treatment systems and services through P3’s or contracting out turns water into a commodity to be sold for profit; and
Whereas the federal government is requiring much-needed improvements to waste water standards - a situation that could open the door to privatization unless dedicated public infrastructure funding is provided to upgrade treatment facilities:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that London oppose privatization in any form of water and wastewater treatment infrastructure and services, including through P3’s or short term service contracts, and resolve to keep these services publicly financed, owned, operated and managed.

Negative effects of privatizing municipal water systems

Council of Canadians water campaigner Vi Bui [writes](#) that privatizing drinking water and sewage treatment services directly threatens our human right to water. P3 projects cost more, eliminate jobs, lack transparency and exclude municipalities from the decision-making process.

Abram Lutes writes in a NB Media Co-op [article](#) that P3s tend to increase user fees in order to make the operation of services profitable for private companies, and the private ownership of the water means those who do not pay their water utility bills can be cut off, presenting potential threats to the human right to clean water.

CUPE [reports](#) that in the last 15 years, municipalities in more than 35 countries have cancelled or not renewed over 180 water privatization contracts.

A [study](#) of 500 U.S. municipal water systems found that private providers charge on average 59 per cent more per household for water and 63 per cent more for sewer than the public option.

In 2004, the City of Hamilton-Wentworth ended a water and wastewater P3 after ten years of environmental problems and mismanagement by several private water corporations. Despite the promises of local economic development, new jobs and cost savings, the workforce had been cut in half. Millions of litres of raw sewage had spilled into Hamilton Harbour and flooded homes, and major additional costs were incurred. In 2008, when the city brought the services back in-house, cost savings were estimated at \$575,000 for that year alone.

In 2016 the District of Sooke, BC, decided not to renew its wastewater treatment operations contract with EPCOR. By eliminating the profit margin from what EPCOR charges for service, the district projected annual savings of \$225,000.

In 2013, the City of Berlin bought back water multinational Veolia's shares in the city's public water authority. After privatization, water rates had risen dramatically. A significant part of the increases went to corporate profits, not to operating or improving the system.

In 2010, the City of Brussels ended a privatization contract with Aquiris, a Veolia-led consortium. Aquiris had deliberately dumped wastewater from 1.1 million people into the river Zenne for 10 days while in a dispute with public authorities.

In 2003 the City of Atlanta, Georgia, ended a 20-year contract with Suez subsidiary United Water. Under privatization, the private company and the city were inundated with complaints of poor and unresponsive service. The system was plagued with breakdowns, water main breaks and "boil only" alerts.

Jakarta Indonesia's water system was privately operated for 17 years, 1998-2015. During this time, residents suffered exorbitant fees and a chronically inadequate supply of clean, drinkable water. Privatization also impaired the government's ability to monitor water quality.

Buying back water systems can be prohibitively expensive. The Washington Post [reports](#) that when residents of Mooresville, Ind., grew frustrated with rate hikes, the city tried to buy the system from American Water but the court-approved price — \$20.3 million — was more than the town of 10,000 was willing or able to pay.

Missoula, Mont., took back ownership of its water system after winning a fight that left the city of 70,000 facing an \$88.6 million bill, plus millions of dollars more in expenses. Under private ownership, the system had leaked so badly that half of the water flowing through its pipes was lost. Yet investors in the Carlyle Group, one of a series of private owners, had received millions of dollars in dividends.

Perhaps most alarming is the prospect of a trade deal that would prevent Canadian municipalities from buying back water systems from private ownership. In a 2017 [blog](#), Brent Patterson quotes The Transnational Institute: "TiSA [the Trade In Services Agreement] will make it impossible for governments to reverse privatization or decrease the influence of the private sector.

Governments will only be able to choose to maintain privatized services as they are or to extend liberalization." TiSA negotiations have been suspended but may be resumed. In a 2016 [blog](#) Council of Canadians warns that the ISDS mechanism in CETA might allow a company to sue if a municipality tries to buy back its water services. In 2015 Argentina was ordered by the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes to pay \$405 million to the French transnational Suez for cancelling the corporation's water and sewage services contract.

Canadian cities to watch:

In 1999 the City of Moncton NB signed a deal with Veolia, a French multinational corporation, to build, finance and operate a new drinking water treatment plant for 20 years. According to [CUPE](#), the deal cost at least \$8.5 million more than a public project in expensive private borrowing costs alone. Now that the contract is up and the Moncton owns the plant, the city is looking for a private corporation to run and maintain the plant for another 15 years. Moncton's water delivery system and wastewater treatment are fully public.

Saint John NB is building a P3 "Safe Clean Drinking Water" project with the Province of New Brunswick, Infrastructure Canada, and private equity partners including Acciona, Brookfield, and North America Construction. Port City Water Services has a 33-year contract to operate the facility. Completion of part of the project has been delayed. [CBC reports](#) "In July [2019], the city announced the [future] switch after it was discovered the South Bay well field that provides water to west Saint John had fallen a metre below sea level, putting it at risk of taking in salt water or brackish water. In September 2017, west side residents were switched over to a new water system — the now-sinking well field — but a month later, the city started receiving complaints about leaking pipes, high pressure, poor taste and hardness of the well water." Another [CBC article](#) reports that a class action lawsuit has been launched against the city by residents who were affected by the switch to hard water from the South Bay well field. It caused major damage to dishwashers and other appliances and necessitated costly investments in water softeners to prevent further damage.

Irving Pulp and Paper is being given a 'sweetheart deal' in low water rates. New water rates [announced](#) in November 2019 will charge residential customers 2.3 per cent more *per year every year* from 2021 to 2029. Irving Pulp and Paper will pay a little more than before, but the Irving Oil Refinery and NB Power's Coleson Cove power plant will pay less, leading to an overall loss of about \$250,000 per year in revenue for the city. Even with the increase, Irving Pulp and Paper gets a generous break. The company drains huge amounts of water from Spruce Lake, putting residential water supplies at risk. The system was built to deliver untreated water to the plant, separate from the treated water system. Doug James of the NB Media Co-op [writes](#) "If the powers to be were to raise the industrial rate for water even to a still ridiculously low rate of 40 cents per cubic meter [by comparison, the [City of Toronto](#) charges industrial customers \$2.77 per cubic meter and the [City of London](#) charges \$0.95 for volumes over 50,000 cubic meters], the City of Saint John could wipe out its entire projected 2021 deficit of \$12 million and have substantial additional revenue coming into the public purse year after year to pay for public transit, road repairs, lifeguards etc., instead of having to cut services as planned." "Ever since the late industrialist, K.C. Irving, demanded and got a 25-year 'sweetheart' deal for the pulp mill in Saint John in 1957, the family has continued to negotiate 'special agreements' with the city that provide a steady flow of cheap water to fuel their industrial enterprises. The more they use, the less they pay."

Recommended reading: [Back In House. Why Local Governments Are Bringing Services Home](#)

[Water Privatization: Facts and Figures](#)

Compiled by Norah Fraser, Council of Canadians London Chapter



Official Blue Communities:

	<u>Date</u>
Otterburn Park, Quebec	20-10-19
Cégep de Saint-Jérôme, Quebec	20-03-24
Vancouver, British Columbia	20-03-11
Oka, Quebec	20-03-10
Prévost, Quebec	20-03-09
Lavaltrie, Quebec	20-03-02
Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs	20-02-26
Mandeville, Quebec	20-02-25
Saint-Alexis-des-Monts, Quebec	20-01-23
Cornwall, Prince Edward Island	20-01-15
Saint-Félix-de-Kingsey, Quebec	19-12-09
Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium	19-11-29
Los Angeles, California, U.S.A	19-11-06
Saint-Félix-de-Valois, Quebec	19-11-06
Roberval, Quebec	19-11-04
Plessisville, Quebec	19-10-29
Longueuil, Quebec	19-10-22
Kempten, Germany	19-10-15
Stratford, Prince Edward Island	19-10-09
Gossau St. Gallen, Switzerland	19-09-10
Victoriaville, Quebec	19-09-04
Saint-Fulgence, Quebec	19-06-05
Saint-François-de-Sales	19-06-04
La Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM), Quebec	19-05-22
Richmond, Quebec	19-05-17
Jericho House, Youth Leadership, Justice & Spirituality Centre, Niagara Region, Ontario	19-05-06
Monseigneur-A.-M.-Parent High School, Saint-Hubert, Quebec	19-04-18
Trois-Rivières, Quebec	19-03-25
Augsburg, Germany	19-03-24
Javea, Spain	19-03-22
City of Montreal, Quebec	19-03-22
Medina Sidonia, Spain	19-03-22
Thermaikos, Greece	19-03-22
McGill University, Quebec	19-03-22
Mòstoles, Spain	19-03-22
Nicolet, Quebec	19-02-11
Town of Danville, Quebec	19-01-28
Cádiz, Spain	18-11-23
Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland	18-10-19
Marburg, Germany	18-07-09
Thessaloniki, Greece	18-06-04
Reformed Church of Nydegkirche, Bern	18-04-15
AEOPAS (a national Spanish network), Blue Communities Ambassador	18-04-09
Berlin, Germany	18-03-22
Neuchâtel, Switzerland	18-03-12
Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada	17-12-10
EYATH in Thessaloniki, Blue Community Ambassador	17-11-28
Munich, Germany	17-10-18

<u>Northampton, Massachusetts</u>	17-06-01
<u>World Council of Churches</u>	16-10-25
<u>University of St.Gallen, Switzerland</u>	16-09-26
<u>City of St.Gallen, Switzerland</u>	16-09-26
<u>Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirchgemeinde Spiez</u>	16-09-01
<u>Federal University of Lavras, Brazil</u>	16-05-13
<u>Paris, France</u>	16-03-21
<u>District of Lunenburg, NS</u>	15-12-08
<u>Thunder Bay, ON</u>	15-03-23
<u>Tsal'alh, St'át'imc Territory</u>	15-01-12
Bayfield, ON	14-10-24
<u>Tay Township, ON</u>	14-04-09
<u>Cambuquira, Brazil</u>	14-03-11
The City of Bern, Switzerland	13-09-18
Evangelisch-reformierte Kirchgemeinde Bern-Johannes Church, Switzerland	13-09-18
Thorold, ON	13-07-02
Welland, ON	12-11-06
Comox, B.C.	12-10-04
Cumberland, B.C.	12-07-09
Nanaimo, B.C.	12-06-25
St. Catharines, ON	12-05-28
Niagara Falls, ON	12-04-25
North Vancouver, B.C.	12-02-06
Ajax, ON	11-12-01
Kingston, ON	11-09-20
Tiny Township, ON	11-09-12
Victoria, B.C.	11-06-24
Burnaby, B.C.	11-03-22

The most up-to-date list of Blue Communities can be found in the sidebar on this page: <https://canadians.org/bluecommunities>

PETITION: MAKE LONDON A BLUE COMMUNITY

Make London a Blue Community

We the undersigned are calling on the City of London to:

- Formally recognize the human right to water and sanitation and commit to refraining from shutting off water and wastewater services in any residence where residents are unable to pay their bills and working with the resident to remediate the debt;
- Reaffirm the commitment made by the City in 2009 not to allow the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities;
- Promote publicly owned and operated water and wastewater services, and oppose the privatization of these essential services.



Please sign on to this petition which the London Chapter will present to City Council at the appropriate moment:

First Name

Last Name

City/Town

Province/Territory



City of London

300 Dufferin Avenue
London Ontario
PO BOX 5035
N6A 4L9

June 15, 2020

Dear Mayor Holder and City Councillors,

In collaboration with the London Chapter of the Council of Canadians, we, the Sisters of St. Joseph, would like to encourage the City of London to join a widening circle of cities, organizations, and institutions that have become a Blue Community, united on the value water. The London Chapter of the Council of Canadians have been raising community support for this designation for many years and we fully endorse their efforts.

At the end of 2017, the Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada was the first religious group to become a Blue Community. Since then, through the efforts of our Blue Community Coordinator Paul Baines, we have increased our knowledge about water issues and joined with many other efforts affirming the human right to water and protecting shared waters from commercialism and privatization.

When water infrastructure is operated by elected governments and owned collectively by the public, pricing and quality issues don't need to compete with profit margins. COVID-19 is reminding us that public health is better protected when people have universal access to clean and affordable water. In 2012, Canada signed onto the United Nations resolution affirming the Human Right to Water and Sanitation and 2020 is visionary year for the City of London to match this Federal commitment.

Becoming a Blue Community shows timely leadership during the current crisis of plastic pollution. We praise the City of London's choice to ban bottled water in city buildings and at city events back in 2009. Consider the impact that has had when currently one million plastic bottles are used every minute globally. When cities promote their own municipal water over bottled water, they are helping to reduce this waste and boost people's trust in public tap water.

Recent choices by the City of London declaring a Climate Emergency and affirming the human right to housing reinforce core Blue Community values of action and access.

Peterborough

Box 566, Peterborough ON K9J 6Z6
1555 Monaghan Rd. Peterborough ON K9J 5N3
T 705.745.1309 F 705.745.1377

Hamilton

Suite 302 - 911 Golf Links Road
Ancaster, Ontario L9K 1H9
T 905.528.0138 F 905.527.5724

London

P. O. Box 487 - 485 Windermere Rd.
London ON N6A 4X3
T 519.432.3781 F 519.432.8557

Finally, becoming a Blue Community invites ongoing public education about the value of water. Blue Community designations enrich people's connection with water and enlivens their commitments for ongoing investment and protection. Lakes Huron and Erie, the Thames River and all its tributaries need this care.

We hope the City of London considers all the benefits of being a Blue Community alongside the Sisters of St. Joseph, the London Council of Canadians Chapter, and a growing family of water protectors around the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Margo Ritchie". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Margo Ritchie, csj
Congregational Leader
Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loretta Manzara". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Loretta Manzara, csj
Executive Director
Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Baines". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Paul Baines
Blue Community Coordinator
Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada



May 26, 2020

Mayor Holder and City Council,

As an organization committed to a sustainable and inclusive community we are writing to you with our support for London becoming a Blue Community.

Water is a human right and it is essential to the wellbeing of our communities. How we get our water, the safety of water, and who owns the water delivery and treatment services are all vital issues that impact every resident of London. London has already demonstrated the beginnings of a commitment to water issues by:

- 1) Banning the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities and at municipal events. The City successfully implemented this early on in 2009 and people have adjusted well to bringing their reusable bottles to events and municipal sites. This has cut down on tons of plastic waste and ensured a deeper connection to our municipal water system.
- 2) Having a publicly financed, owned, and operated water and wastewater services. Ensuring the safety and delivery of our water decisions are made in the best interests of people in London and region. This public ownership of vital infrastructure and services must continue into the future

We commend you on these commitments and would like to see us join cities across Canada and around the world by becoming a Blue Community. The City has made climate action a priority and although some initiatives related to a climate action framework are complicated, signing on to the Blue Communities initiative is a simple one that signals a strong commitment to one of the most basic of human rights, our right to water.

Sustainable, resilient and inclusive communities are needed more than ever. London is well on its way to fulfilling the commitments to become one, and signing on to the Blue Water Communities would be another very important step in this direction. We look forward to hearing from you about your commitment to being a Blue Community. .

Regards,

Shawna Lewkowitz
President, Urban League of London