

Presentation to the Water Act Hearings

Summerside, PE
October 13, 2015



The Council of Canadians

We are Canada's largest social organization in the country.

We have a few hundred members here in PEI

We advocate for:

- clean water
- fair trade
- climate justice and green energy
- public health care
- a vibrant democratic society

We educate and empower people to hold our governments and corporations accountable.

Deep Water Wells:

We are on record opposing the lifting of the moratorium on high capacity deep water wells for agricultural irrigation. As well, we have asked the PEI government to revoke the “grandfathered” deepwater wells.

Cavendish Farms (Robert Irving)

PEI Potato Board

PEI Federation of Agriculture

PEI Department of Agriculture

Here is what they say on Deep Water Wells:

- Supplemental irrigation uses a very small fraction of our available water supply
- Irrigation can help reduce nitrates in our water
- Irrigation can mean fewer acres of potatoes, not more
- Irrigation will double the economic value of PEI potatoes
- PEI has an abundance of groundwater



This photo was taken in mid-September. In the next field, 30 meters away, more than 40 cattle were grazing.

Digging deeper wells is not
the answer to the problems
with potato production in
the province.

We say: Wake Up Before it
is too Late. It's time to
transform to a natural and
organic small-scale farming.

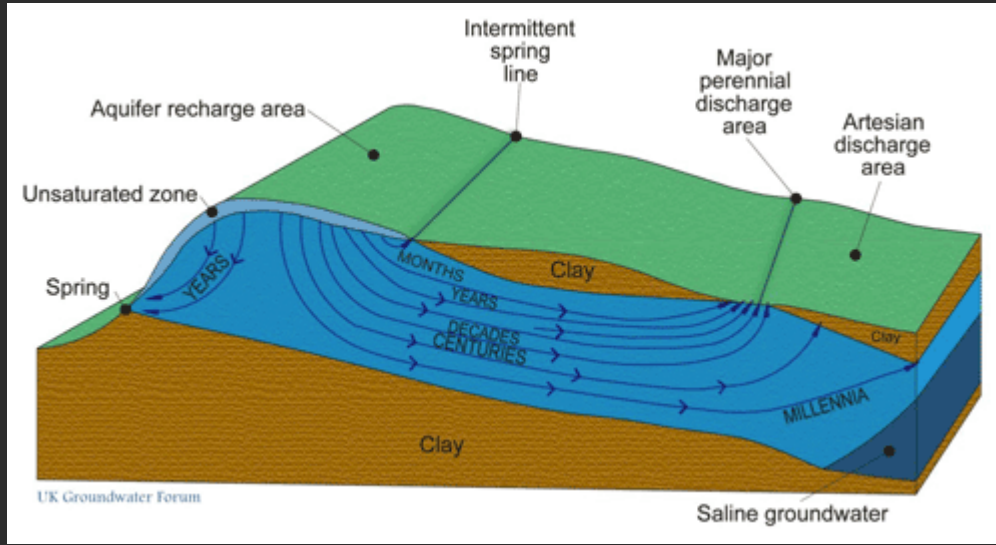
We recommended PEI
Government establish a PEI
Land Trust.

The purpose:

- to buy out potato farms over the next 20 years
- to provide land to young people who want to farm in a sustainable way

Positives in proposed Act:

- consolidating existing regulations and laws to manage PEI's water on a watershed basis
- ensuring good water quality for people and the environment
- considering water in land use and groundwater sources
- improving conservation and efficiency



Water spends anywhere from two weeks to ten thousand years as groundwater depending on aquifer characteristic

Once water enters the groundwater system, it can reside there for a long time. Because of this, pollutants that enter groundwater can linger much longer than they do in streams or rivers, making groundwater more vulnerable to contamination.

Impacts from large groundwater withdrawals on nearby wells can be profound and dangerous. From the withdrawal itself or from the withdrawal “pulling in” nearby contaminants into water supplies.

Groundwater recharge will be threatened by a changing climate.



Council of Canadians Recommendations



1. Affirm water as a human right and a public trust
2. Clearly state the public ownership of surface and groundwater
3. Must state superiority of public rights over individual user rights
4. Recognize that water has rights beyond its usefulness to us and the right of other living beings to survive and thrive (rights of Mother Earth)
5. Outline criteria for and prioritization of uses
6. Include in the Water Act the financial, personnel, and public resources needed to implement the Act, without which even the strongest legal act will fail

- 9.Ensures a process to revoke permits where polluting or abusing water is found
10. Support the value that water services must be kept as an essential public service. And state that there is no place for private profit in the delivery of water. Include a ban on using PEI groundwater for bottled water.
11. Give priority to the needs of people and communities over corporations
12. Outline a plan that obligates government to provide water and sanitation to the most vulnerable
13. Include strict polluting controls, strong conservation regulations, and stringent monitoring
14. Recognize Indigenous title and jurisdiction to watersheds

British Columbia's Water Act

Problems:

- Includes First In Time, First in Right clause
- Does not include community's right to say NO
- Ignores First Nations' rights
- Allocates 250 litres per household for essential household use









There is hope - and that is illustrated by looking at the bald eagle. The bald eagle took a heavy blow from DDT. A pesticide that enters the food chain and causes reproductive failure. The bald eagle is a great conservation story. PEI now has hundreds.

Thank-you