We the parish of _____in the Diocese of Toronto, recognizing that water is essential for life, call on all levels of government to ensure that every community in Canada has access to safe drinking water, particularly in light of the increasing pressures on Canada's freshwater and groundwater systems.

Water is life. No living being can survive without water, which underpins every ecosystem on earth. Water shapes our geography, our landscapes and communities. It is essential for drinking, food preparation, and washing, not to mention for agricultural, industrial, and recreational use. Equally importantly, it is essential for maintaining the health of the broader environment. Water also has enormous cultural and spiritual significance in many cultures and faith traditions, from those of Indigenous Peoples to our own Christian tradition, into which we are initiated through baptism in water. Our Scriptures, written in an arid land, repeatedly emphasize the importance of clean, drinkable water. From the river of Eden to the water from the rock in Exodus, from Jesus identifying Himself as the source of living water, to the river of life in Revelation, water in Scripture is associated with cleansing, healing, renewal, and the flourishing of all living creatures.

Canada has about one-fifth of the world's freshwater resources, and the world's third-largest store of renewable freshwater. 88% of drinking water in Canada comes from rivers and lakes, with the remainder coming from groundwater sources via wells.

Because of its abundance in our Diocese, we often take water for granted. Yet there are communities in Canada, especially Indigenous communities, which still lack access to clean water. While some significant progress has been made in this area, as of Fall 2026, 38 long-term drinking water advisories remain in effect in 36 First Nations communities.[1]

Indigenous communities are also the most likely to experience source water contamination due to industrial and extractive industries. Upstream industrial pollution from the Dryden paper mill has caused generations of fatal mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows and Whitedog First Nations in Northwestern Ontario. Cancer rates in the Mikisew Cree First Nation and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, located downstream of Alberta tar sands operations, are at least 25 percent higher than average.[2]

However, threats to water are not confined to remote Indigenous communities. Freshwater ecosystems and water supplies are under increasing pressure from pollution and urban sprawl. Over 72% of Southern Ontario's wetlands, which help filter water and mitigate floods, have already been lost to development. Recent federal and provincial legislation, designed to spur economic growth, fast-tracks environmental assessment processes and even exempts certain projects from environmental regulations, weakening protections on our water systems.

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[1] https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660

[2] https://mikisewcree.ca/first-nation-accuses-alberta-of-withholding-cancer-data

Climate change affects the water cycle from precipitation to river flow to groundwater recharge, making water quality, quantity, and availability less predictable and reliable. Climate-related flooding puts pressure on ageing municipal infrastructure, while increased heat and drought conditions can foster toxic algal blooms in rivers and lakes and deplete groundwater resources.

The growth of AI is accompanied by demand for hyperscale data centres, which require enormous amounts of clean water for cooling their servers. While it is possible for data centres to lower their water consumption by using cool air or recycled rainwater, the impacts such facilities have already had on municipal water systems in dry regions, and the lack of transparency and accountability in the sector, have given rise to legitimate concerns. Mississauga City Council recently passed a one-year moratorium on the development of large-scale data centres.[3]

With so many challenges affecting water in our communities, we cannot afford to be complacent. We need to be aware of the pressures on water systems in our communities and urge our elected officials to take steps to protect and ensure access to clean water for all people in Canada.

Here are some suggestions for how you or your parish might wish to follow up on this motion:

- Write to the Federal Minister of Indigenous Services, urging action on long-term drinking water advisories in Indigenous communities.
- Recent provincial and federal legislation has streamlined the environmental assessment process, especially for projects undertaken in Special Economic Zones or deemed to be in the national interest. Write your MP or MPP and the ministers responsible to urge that water protection is prioritized in the approval process for any such projects.
- Federal guidelines on data centre development recommend minimizing freshwater consumption and prioritizing "sustainable, low-impact technologies and practices," but these guidelines are voluntary and non-binding. Write your provincial and municipal officials to require new data centres adhere to these guidelines and be transparent and accountable for their impacts.
- Learn about stresses affecting the sources of drinking water in your own community and get involved in local efforts to protect local water systems.

Learn more and find resources on our website at www.toronto.anglican.ca/vestry-motion

The prophet Ezekiel describes a vision of water flowing from the temple, bringing life wherever it flows (Ez. 47). In our land blessed with water, let us do all we can to ensure that it continues to bring life to all our communities.

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[3] https://www.mississauga.ca/city-of-mississauga-news/news/mississauga-approves-temporary-pause-for-large-scale-data-centre-development/