

Council of Canadians
- Acting for Social Justice -
Presentation on Draft Water Act
April 5, 2017

Positive Things About the Draft Act

- Reference to common good
- Right to water
- Water for all living things & ecosystems
- Lack of scientific certainty
- Ban on exporting bottled water

Water as a Human Right

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognized that water and sanitation should be a human right. Water as a human right is as much about the quality, making sure that the water is clean and you do not get sick from drinking it, as it is about access.

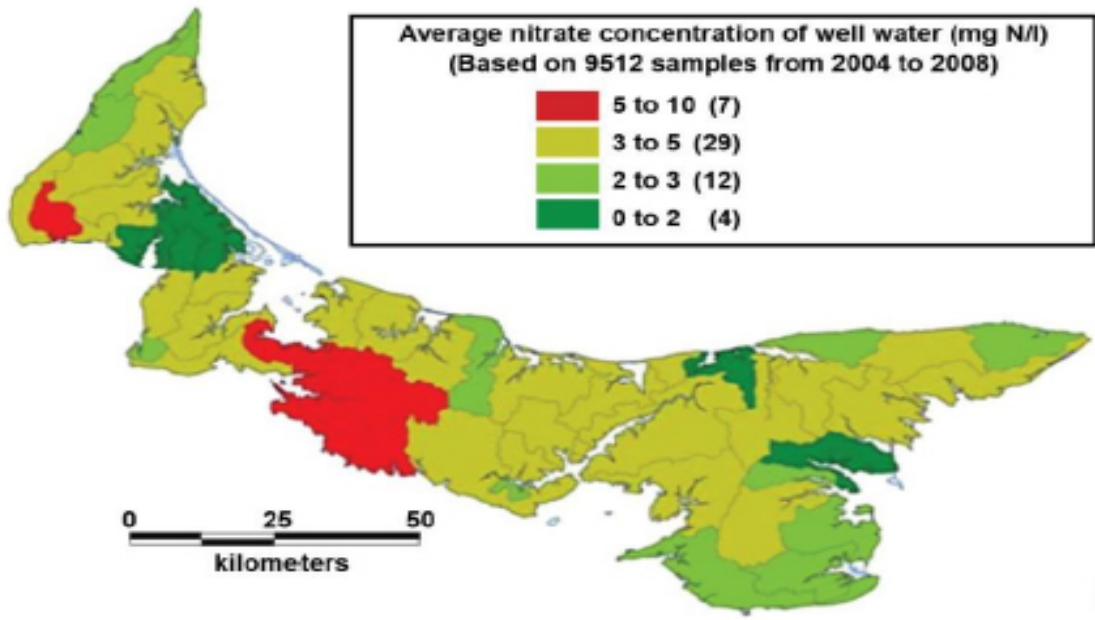
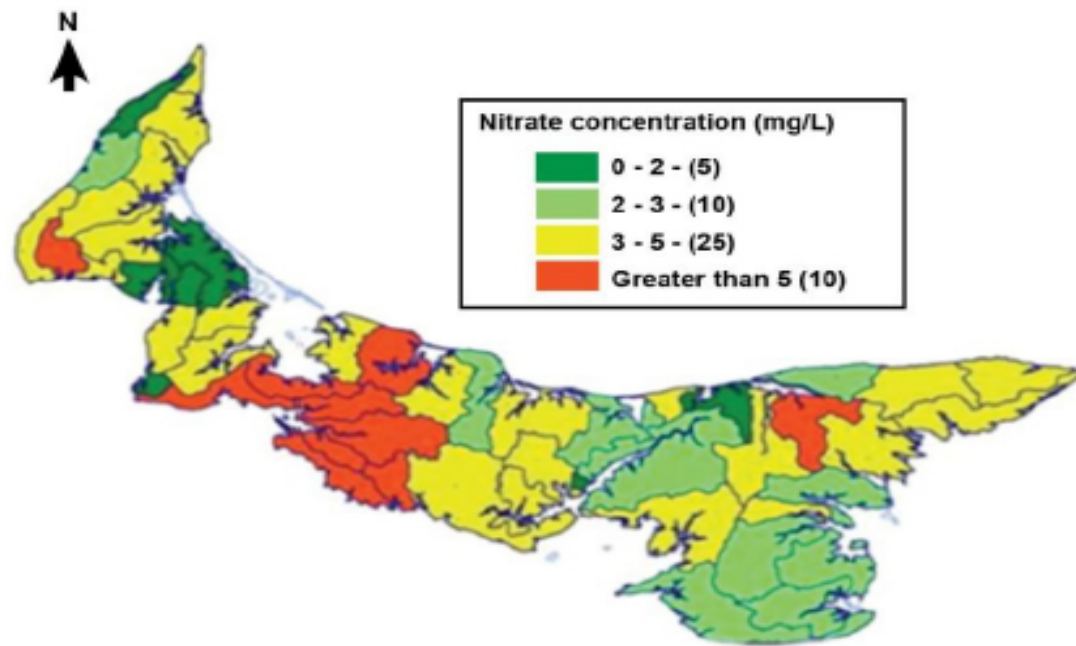
By enshrining the human right to water and sanitation within the PEI Water Act, Islanders gain access to remedies. The government, corporations, and people are held accountable for their actions or omissions.

The most broadly accepted definition of the **Precautionary Principle** is Principle #15 of the June 1992, Declaration of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, which reads: “In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.” This definition of the precautionary principle is currently enshrined in the 1999 Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA 1999): “Whereas the Government of Canada is committed to implementing the precautionary principle that, where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

What is not in the Draft Act

- No Ban on Fracking
- No Reference to Agriculture
- No mention of high capacity wells for agricultural irrigation
- No strong statement on managing water with community solidarity and democratic participation in decision making at every stage

How will the Water Act protect our groundwater from contamination?



(e) “contaminant” includes any solid, liquid, gas, waste, odour, vibration, radiation or sound, or a combination of them

(i) which is foreign to or in excess of the natural constituents of the environment into which it is being introduced,

(ii) which will or may adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the natural, physical, chemical, or biological quality of the environment,

(iii) which is or may be injurious to the health or safety of a person or be damaging to property or to plant or animal life,

(iv) which interferes with or is likely to interfere with the comfort, well-being, livelihood, or enjoyment of life of a person, or

(v) which is declared by regulation to be a contaminant;

"While most of the associations have been found when nitrate levels are higher than the drinking water standard," the Iowa Environmental Council said, "some research suggests that nitrate concentrations even lower than the drinking water standard may be harmful."

Peter Weyer, interim director of the Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination at the University of Iowa, has looked the impact of long-term exposure to low levels of nitrates. His work shows an association between nitrates and some cancers in women.

"Based on our research and elsewhere in the U.S. and abroad, it looks like nitrates are problematic for other health effects," said Weyer, who reviewed the group's report. "It's important to realize there are other reasons to be concerned about high nitrate levels in drinking water."

Section 30 of the Act must be strengthened. This is the section which is suppose to give us a process for the purposes of preventing or addressing threats to the quality of water resources, the quantity of water resources, the environmental flow needs of a watercourse or the health of aquatic ecosystems in a watershed...