

## **THE GLOBAL ISSUES PROJECT's ROUNDTABLE on FRESHWATER**

The Roundtable on Freshwater emphasizes dialog between accomplished professionals, each of whom has specific expertise on water issues, about ways to manage international and national water problems. We wished to identify and prioritize actions and strategic planning for a whole spectrum of freshwater issues, with the intent to anticipate potential crises and avoid them through action that can be taken now. Each participant was asked to identify and prioritize within their own field of expertise and also, to give their view of actions required in the broad picture of water issues. There is a follow-up plan, to be carried out by the volunteer follow-up team, who are a credible, professional, and knowledgeable group. Participants in the roundtable are encouraged to develop their own follow-up plan within their own range of contacts.

### **THE ROUNDTABLE PROGRAM** (Nov 8 and 9, 2008)

The six session program:

- ONE – Water Governance
- TWO- Water and Peace
- THREE - Water and Security
- FOUR - Water, Energy and Technology
- FIVE – Water and Ecological Governance
- SIX - Follow-up Proposals

There was also a session where two workshops were presented:

- Foresight
- Supply/Demand Modelling

### **The Program was preceded by a public forum (Nov 7, Geo Ignatieff Theatre, U of Toronto, 7:30pm) - “Fresh Water Problems – Emerging Threats and Urgent Priorities”**

The discussion guidelines included a spectrum of national and international issues from which speakers selected appropriate topics for their own short presentations and recommendations. Half of each session was devoted to dialog. Canadian water issues overlap international water issues, and we aimed to enable a useful cross-fertilization of ideas. It was our intent that the international participants will return to their home with information that would benefit their own countries. Beyond this, the scope of the project on the international water issues will rely on information from the roundtable being circulated through personal contacts, and publication on websites, in reports and the media.

### **SPEAKERS**

Our speakers have responded with enthusiasm and agree that the aims of the expert roundtable on water are unique and important. We are proud of our list of speakers, as it includes many well-known experts. Virtually all them have international experience but three of them were specifically invited to bring progressive ideas from international sources.

### LEAD ORGANIZERS OF THE ROUNDTABLE AND THE SPONSORS

The organizers of the Expert Roundtable on Water are Science for Peace and the Canadian Pugwash Group, both of which are registered charitable organizations. Their respective websites are [www.scienceforpeace.ca](http://www.scienceforpeace.ca) and [www.pugwashgroup.ca](http://www.pugwashgroup.ca). These two organizations are assisted through further sponsorship from The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, Trinity College, the Harbinger Foundation and several private donors.

The Expert Roundtable on Water is part of the Global Issues Project (GIP), which is discussed in detail in the Global Issues Project Prospectus. Two expert roundtables – Forests and Energy & Climate Change have been held already. The Wasan Action Framework was issued as an output from the latter roundtable, and it is of note that several of the signatures are from authors of the latest IPCC report.

### THE GLOBAL ISSUES PROJECT

**The Global Issues Project is designed to explain inter-relationships between vital factors, and to devise and promote strategies that might help humankind to manage its way through anticipated crises.”**

### SYNOPSIS FOR GIP WATER CONCERNS

“Canada’s major water users are: the producers of electric power, water-intensive industries, mining, agricultural enterprises using irrigation and public water supply systems. Energy production, in many forms, involves major water usage. Water-intensive industries cover a spectrum ranging from pulp and paper to extraction of oil sands; thereby Canada has a virtual export of water. Mining not only uses water but also is particularly noted for water pollution. Irrigation for food crops uses groundwater, where levels are known to be decreasing, or acquires water from glacier-fed rivers where flow decreases year after year. Public water systems supply water and treat wastewater at increasing energy cost. At the same time, leaks in worn-out infrastructure waste up to 30% of treated water. Other countries view Canada as well-endowed with water, but in several regions of Canada the situation is quite the opposite. Most of Canada’s water is non-renewable and many of Canada’s rivers flow north and are inaccessible to southern populations. Ideally, the only water available for use should be that which is replaced by annual precipitation. Canada has no comprehensive policy guidelines; its current federal water policy originated in the 1980s, and development of a national water strategy is severely behind schedule. At the same time, Canada has allowed its in-house scientific and policy expertise on water to decline, so that it appears to have little capability to deal with the myriad water crises that are pending in Canada. Canadian problems are representative of several global issues, and progressive ideas from international sources can be shared for mutual benefit.”