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Swann: Alberta's Water Belongs to Albertans

Calgary – The government's public consultations on water management could provide cover for the Tories to develop private water markets, according to Dr. David Swann, Shadow Environment Minister.

"The people of Alberta must retain the right to own and manage our own water," Swann says. "If we put water into private hands, that leaves our water supply vulnerable to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Right now, water is excluded from NAFTA – you can't legally ship it across borders unless it is bottled. But if this government allows private water markets to emerge, there's a very real possibility we'll be forced to sell our water in its natural state to the United States."

Parts of Alberta already face water shortages; the Bow, Oldman, and South Saskatchewan Rivers have already been placed under moratorium – there will be no new water licences granted for these rivers. In northern Alberta, oil and gas development is already putting the Athabasca River under enormous stress, and the same will soon be true for the North Saskatchewan, when new upgraders begin operation.

Industrial development and population growth aren't the only factors threatening Alberta's water supply. Glaciers that supply the Bow, North Saskatchewan, and Athabasca rivers are shrinking rapidly.

"We can't afford to let this government's ideology turn water, an essential resource, into just another commodity to be shipped outside Alberta for a profit. Human need and the health of our environment are far more important to our province's long-term future," says Swann.

"I encourage all Albertans who care about the future of our water supply to attend these consultations and let the government know that our most important resource must be protected and conserved for today's needs and future generations."

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