



SANITATION & WATER ACTION
NETWORK CANADA
RESEAU D'ACTION POUR
L'ASSAINISSEMENT ET L'EAU CANADA

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NEWS RELEASE

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Canada Should Fight Global Poverty by Investing in Sanitation and Water: SWAN Canada

OTTAWA, March 20 – On the eve of World Water Day (March 22), a coalition of Canadian organizations concerned about the global sanitation crisis is calling on the Canadian government to make investment in sanitation and water a foreign aid priority. In an open letter sent to Minister of International Cooperation Beverley Oda, Sanitation & Water Action Network (SWAN) Canada called for increased investment in sanitation as a way to save lives, strengthen economies, and fight poverty around the globe.

2.6 billion people worldwide lack access to basic sanitation like toilets or safe latrines. As a result, millions die of preventable diseases each year – some 5,000 children every day. Globally, the economic cost of the sanitation and water crisis is approximately \$38 billion annually; in contrast, every dollar spent on sanitation yields an average economic benefit of \$9.

“Sanitation and water investments deliver cost-effective and concrete poverty-fighting results,” said SWAN Canada coordinator George Yap. “Engaging governments on the issue of sanitation is particularly challenging - no one wants to talk about how roads in slum areas become rivers of sewage when it rains, or how people have to defecate in plastic bags because they don’t have anywhere else to go. But doing something as simple as building safe latrines for a school, or educating people on the importance of washing their hands can lead to dramatic improvements in quality of life.”

According to the United Nations, improving sanitation can actually accelerate progress in key areas of the Millennium Development Goals, the global targets that Canada and other countries have committed to achieving by 2015, such as eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child mortality, providing universal primary education, promoting gender equality, and ensuring environmental sustainability. To highlight the issue, the UN has designated 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation.

One way that Canada could take immediate action is to support the **Global Sanitation Fund**. The Fund was recently launched by the UN's Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (www.wsscc.org) to mobilize the international community and coordinate efforts to address the crisis.

The UN estimates that with sustained funding, basic sanitation for the entire world could be achieved within one to two decades. In relative terms, the cost of this global investment (approx. \$10 billion per year) is about one-third of yearly spending on bottled water.

For more information or to read SWAN Canada's letter to Minister Oda, visit www.swanacanada.org.

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Sanitation & Water Action Network (SWAN) Canada is a newly-formed and growing coalition of Canadian organizations united in the belief that sanitation and water initiatives must be a foreign aid priority for Canada.

Through SWAN Canada, like-minded groups are able to come together with one voice to engage citizens and governments on the critical importance of sanitation and water in the fight against global poverty. To learn more, visit www.swanacanada.org.

SWAN Canada members:

- [AMREF Canada](#)
- [CARE Canada](#)
- [Canadian Physicians for Aid & Relief](#)
- [Harbinger Foundation](#)
- [Oxfam Canada](#)
- [Results Canada](#)
- [Ryan's Well Foundation](#)
- [Save the Children Canada](#)
- [WaterCan](#)
- [Water for People Canada](#)
- [Water & Sanitation Rotarian Action Group](#)
- [World Vision Canada](#)

Additional Resources:

- United Nations "International Year of Sanitation 2008" - <http://esa.un.org/iys/>
- UN World Water Day homepage - <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/flashindex.html>
- Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council - <http://www.wsscc.org/>