



Dozens of Sanitation Water Action Network members and supporters attend a rally to mark World Water Day on Parliament Hill yesterday. Roughly one-seventh of the world's population does not have access to clean drinking water.

# Water should be foreign aid priority, says group

## World Water Day marks crisis affecting nearly 1 billion people

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**It's likely something that many Ottawa residents take for granted.**

Yet clean water is something that nearly a billion people in the world don't have access to. "The average Canadian uses 329 litres of water per day," said WaterCan executive director Gary Plum. "Through a five-minute shower, we use 100 litres of water. Many homes don't have the newest six-litre flush toilets. We water our lawns and fill our swimming pools." In the meantime, people all over the world don't have access to clean water, he said. Dozens of Sanitation Wa-

ter Action Network members and supporters spoke out for those less fortunate at a rally to mark World Water Day on Parliament Hill yesterday. "Canada and other donor countries need to make water and sanitation a foreign aid priority," SWAN spokesman George Yap said. "All over the world, people are walking further and further in search of clean water," said Robert Fox, executive director for Oxfam Canada. Since gathering water is women's work in many parts of the world, "millions of girls are not in

school because they are searching for water," he said. Every year, 2.2 million people in the developing world — many of which are children — die from preventable diseases caused by dirty water and poor sanitation conditions. In addition, about 2.5 billion people, or two-thirds of the world's population, don't have access to toilets, said Plum. The lack of toilets affects every aspect of life and work, said Chris Dendys, executive director for Results Canada. "The crisis is huge, but

we can do something about it," she said. Rally organizers presented a toilet seat petition to Ottawa Centre MP and foreign affairs critic Paul Dewar, who said he would give it to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. "Every time he gets on his seat, he'll think of seats for everyone else," he said. A featured speaker at the Go Green Show at Lansdowne Park yesterday, Plum asked Ottawa residents to look at their water consumption. "Look at your water bill," he said, "and ask yourself, 'how can I conserve?'"

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Oxfam Canada's Robert Fox

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