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Institute for Water,
Environment and Health



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FREE PARKING

Why Almost Everything (Including Progress on Water and Sanitation) is Better Than We Think it is

In an era of seemingly constant bad news and predictions of imminent or future disastrous outcomes for humanity, it is necessary to step back and look at the dramatic improvements in almost everything that have happened during our history. Using United Nations and other sources of data, such a perspective shows immense improvements in the economy, life expectancy, birth rates, population growth, child and maternal deaths, infectious diseases and health, nutrition and food safety, the environment, accidental deaths and general safety and happiness (in many, but not all, countries). After a general survey of these improvements, the state of water and sanitation around the world will be examined.

There are obvious problems still to be dealt with, but a historical perspective gives grounds for a cautious optimism. This pessimism is not new. A 19th century politician summarized it well when he said that *"We cannot absolutely prove that those are in error who tell us that society has reached a turning point, that we have seen our best days. But so said all before us, and with just as much apparent reason..... on what principle is it then, that we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?"* Thomas Macaulay, (1830) English politician and author (History of England) 1800 to 1859.

SPEAKER



Dr Colin Mayfield has over 40 years' experience in research and technical assistance in the areas of integrated water resources management (IWRM), water and soil microbiology, groundwater systems, aquatic toxicology. He holds a BSc and PhD in Biology from the University of Liverpool, UK. Professor Mayfield has authored or co-authored over 200 papers in these subject areas. He has served as a consultant and advisor for many governments, international and national agencies, and various companies; has taught microbiology and IWRM courses – many of them as Distance Learning programmes at the University of Waterloo, Canada and UNU-INWEH. He is currently a Professor of Microbiology at the University of Waterloo, where he was previously the Associate Dean of Computing. At UNU-INWEH, Professor Mayfield contributes to development of new online courses, and to research on the status and trends in capacity development in the water sector.

7:00PM @ McMaster Innovation Park (Conference Room 1AB)

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