



**UNBOTTLE IT!**

**Tap into public drinking water.**

**A guide on how to obtain a bottled water ban in your community**



Dear concerned citizens,

We are thrilled that you have decided to defend water as a shared public resource by calling for bans on the sale and purchase of bottled water in your neighbourhood. We hope that you will find the resources in this tool kit helpful.

Bottled water corporations have aggressively campaigned to undermine faith in public drinking water over the past 10 years. While bottled water was consumed by few people a decade ago, today nearly one-third of Canadian households drink bottled water to meet their hydration needs. This is the result of a careful strategy by multinational bottled water corporations to create a culture in which bottled water is seen as a necessity.

Nothing can be further from the truth. In a country like Canada, which has one of the best public drinking water systems in the world, more and more communities like yours are realizing that bottled water is a drain on our water resources and on budgets. Communities are rejecting the corporate takeover of their public water resources by banning the sale and purchase of bottled water in public spaces and in environmentally-friendly businesses.

This tool kit contains tips on steps you can take to get a bottled water ban, fact sheets with background information on bottled water, and sample letters and resolutions that can be adopted in your community. We will also update our website with new tools and resources on a regular basis, so please visit it often at [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org).

We appreciate your efforts and look forward to hearing your success stories as you take on this very important cause.

We can all help “Unbottle It!”



Maude Barlow,  
National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians  
Senior Advisor on Water to the President of the UN General Assembly

and



Sid Ryan,  
President of CUPE Ontario

# 'Unbottle It' in your community!

## Tips on building a bottled water-free community

*There are many ways you can get involved to help “kick the bottle” and secure a bottled water ban in your community. Here are some steps you can take:*

### 1. Gather Information

#### ***Are there bottled water bans in your community?***

Across the country, municipal councils, school boards, hospitals, churches and other institutions have begun banning bottled water. Once a ban is achieved in one place, it has the potential of snowballing and spreading to other parts of the community. If there are existing bans, finding out how they were achieved, what strategies were employed and what obstacles may have been overcome could help you with achieving your ban.

If there is a Council of Canadians chapter or CUPE local in your neighbourhood, they may have been involved and may be able to help you find out more about local water activism.

#### ***Are there bottling plants in your community?***

According to Agriculture and Agrifoods Canada, there are approximately 65 water bottlers in Canada. The majority are located in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, with other plants located in Atlantic Canada and the Prairies.

Water is either extracted from a local watershed with a provincial government permit or from a municipal water source. You can use information about your local bottling plants to bring the campaign closer to home.

Write your provincial Environment ministry or municipality to find out how much water is being extracted from your local watershed. Ask if water shortages have been reported near the plant.

Canada is a net exporter of bottled water. Most bottled water is consumed outside the area where it is produced. In Canada, bottled water is sold primarily to the United States. To get a sense of how much water leaves your watershed, and of the carbon footprint of water that is transported over long distances, contact the bottled water company and ask where the bottled water is being sold.

This information may help highlight the extent to which bottled water companies have exploited your community's resources as well as the unsustainability of the industry.





### ***What corporations are selling bottled water in your community?***

Do your schools and other public institutions have contracts with a bottled water corporation? What can you find out about the contract? In some cases, beverage contracts have restricted access to public water by imposing limits on the number of water fountains in a community. In other cases, institutions with beverage contracts have themselves lost the incentive to maintain public drinking water infrastructure.

Getting a bottled water ban may also be an act of solidarity against environmental destruction, water shortages and human rights violations caused by large beverage companies in other parts of the world. What do you know about the activities of the corporation selling bottled water in your schools, hospitals and other public facilities? Companies like Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Nestlé are responsible for environmental and human rights violations in other parts of the world. They have been the targets of international boycotts organized by grassroots activists around the world.

For more information, see:

[www.indiaresource.org](http://www.indiaresource.org)

[www.cokewatch.org](http://www.cokewatch.org)

[www.babymilkaction.org](http://www.babymilkaction.org)

[www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water)

## **2. Get organized**

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### ***Connect with local activists***

Bottled water bans are being called for by Council of Canadians chapters, CUPE locals, student groups and other water activists across the country. Find out what groups are working on bans in your community and how you can get involved by contacting the organizations..

You may also want to consider setting up a Council of Canadians chapter to benefit from the resources and support the organization can offer in helping you achieve your bottled water ban.

Posting information about your meeting on a local activist listserv, the community listings page in your local newspaper, or public service announcements on local radio stations will help others find you.

### ***Work with friendly decision-makers***

If you are aiming for a school board or municipal ban, you will need to find a trustee or municipal councillor willing to champion the cause and introduce a resolution. They should give you an idea of what type of resolution would be feasible, the types of obstacles you may face, and how you can help garner support for a resolution to ban bottled water.

***Make contact with friendly journalists***

Media across the country have been very interested in bottled water bans. If there are reporters with an environment or health beat at your local newspaper or other media, they may be interested in meeting with you to discuss your plans for a bottled water ban. If you are working towards a municipal ban, there are journalists assigned specifically to municipal politics. Call the media outlets to find out who they are and ask for a meeting or some time to talk by phone.

## 3. Set Objectives

***Determine what type of ban would work best***

Not all bottled water bans that have been implemented across the country are the same. Working with a school board trustee or a municipal councillor should help you determine what would be most suitable for your community. (See a sample of a municipal resolution on page 15.)

The following factors might help you determine what is most suitable for your community:

- The amount of support within your school board or municipal council for a ban
- Access to public drinking water in public spaces
- The amount of public support for a ban

If access to drinking water is poor, you might want to incorporate a commitment to improve access into the resolution. If the sense is that there will be little support for a complete ban on the sale and purchase of bottled water, you might want to start with a more modest objective, such as a ban on serving bottled water at meetings. If there is little information about the general feasibility, you might want to call for a study aimed at phasing out the sale and purchase of bottled water.

***Work towards achieving the necessary conditions***

To achieve a bottled water ban, you should make sure the conditions are right. Before calling for a councillor or trustee to introduce a resolution, you might want to start by:

- Making sure those who will be voting on the resolution are well-informed by sending them the fact sheets included in this kit, or setting up meetings to speak to them individually.
- Starting a public awareness campaign to bring the general public on board



## 4. Raise Public Awareness

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In order to convince a municipality to implement a ban on bottled water, you must show strong public support for the cause. Here are some ideas on garnering public support.

### ***Organize a public forum***

A public forum is a good way to bring the community on board. Your forum might feature local water activists, experts from your public water utility, and speakers from groups working on this issue such as the Council of Canadians and CUPE Ontario.

### ***Organize a tour of your public water utility***

Find out if your local public water treatment facility is able to host a tour, so the community can witness firsthand the amount of testing and monitoring that drinking water undergoes in a typical Canadian facility before it reaches your tap. This will allow the public to have questions about the quality of local drinking water answered and build faith in the public system.

### ***Encourage community groups and businesses to “unbottle” their spaces***

Encouraging local businesses, churches and other community institutions to ban bottled water may be a lot easier than getting a municipal or school board ban since there are fewer decision-makers and less formal processes required. Encourage restaurants and other businesses to stop purchasing and selling bottled water and publicize their decision. Ask community groups to serve tap water at meetings instead of bottled water. The Council of Canadians and CUPE Ontario have developed a window sign that businesses and community groups can place in windows or elsewhere to declare that they support public water.

### ***Organize a film screening***

There are several great films about water. The award-winning film, *For Love of Water (FLOW)* screened at Sundance in 2008, features the work of Canadian water activist Maude Barlow, a citizens' group in Michigan that fought to protect an aquifer in Mescota County by opposing a Nestlé bottling plant, activists in South India who have successfully stopped Coca-Cola from draining their groundwater sources, and other inspiring stories. Find out how to get a copy by contacting the Council of Canadians by e-mail at [inquiries@canadians.org](mailto:inquiries@canadians.org) or by phone at (toll free) **1-800-387-7177**.



**Get the word out through the media**

The media is a vital tool in getting information out to the public. A few things you can do to get media attention:

- Invite the local media to your public forum.
- Organize a press conference to launch the campaign.
- Set up an editorial board meeting with your local newspaper.
- Write an op-ed for your local newspaper.
- Participate in phone-in radio shows if a relevant topic is being discussed.
- Feed newsworthy information to friendly journalists on a regular basis.

**5. Secure the ban**

Once you've set up a core group of activists, worked out the type of ban you'd like, managed to find a municipal councillor or school board trustee to champion the issue, raised awareness and built community support, you are ready to push for a ban in your community.

**Introducing the ban**

Work with a councillor or school board trustee to determine at what level the resolution for a ban should be introduced – in some cases this may be a subcommittee rather than the entire school board or municipal council – and determine an opportune time to introduce the resolution.

**Keeping the pressure on**

Once a date has been set for a vote, you should keep the pressure on decision-makers through:

- Petitions by community members.
- A deputation by someone from your group before the vote takes place. (Your municipal council or school board will be able to provide instructions.)
- Phone calls and e-mails to decision-makers.
- Favourable media coverage.
- A large number of supporters to fill seats at the meeting where the vote is to take place.

There are lots of ways you can get active and help establish a bottled water ban in your community. These tips, along with the fact sheets and sample letters and municipal resolution will help get you started. For more information about the campaign, visit [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org).

# Five Reasons to

*In Canada, we are not immune to the growing threats of water scarcity. Twenty per cent of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years. Canada is a net exporter of bottled water, selling its ancient glacier waters all over the world mostly for the profit of the large foreign-owned, multi-national water companies. In *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*, Council of Canadians Chairperson Maude Barlow writes, “Most provinces charge these companies next to nothing to extract this water from springs and aquifers, and whole watersheds are now under threat from this practice.” But people are fighting back. Questions are being asked in communities across Canada about the extensive and damaging water-taking practices of for-profit bottling companies and citizens are calling on municipal governments and school boards to stop selling bottled water. Now is a great time to join the fight:*

*Here are five reasons to ban bottled water:*



## 1. Bottled water leads to water shortages.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, water shortages have been reported in the Great Lakes region near water bottling plants. In Guelph, Ontario, a citizen’s coalition called the Wellington Water Watchers (WWW), which includes members of the Council of Canadians, has launched a campaign against Nestlé. The corporation’s water-taking of 3.6 million litres per day is causing a reversal of groundwater flow to the Mill Creek.

Manufacturing water bottles also requires huge amounts of water. It takes three to five litres of water to produce every one-litre plastic bottle.

The demand for bottled water is also contributing to the global water crisis. Water shortages caused by Coca-Cola’s groundwater draining in Plachimada, India have led thousands of people to demand the closure of the Coca-Cola plant in their community. Medha Patkar, a social activist leading the battle in Plachimada recently told the media, “The bottling of water has really exploited our ground reserves [...] killed our aquifers, and [...] encroached upon the people’s rights to natural resources and the right to plan with those resources.”

## 2. Bottled water contributes to climate change.

In an era when the world is dealing with the impacts of climate change, the bottled water industry requires massive amounts of fossil fuels to manufacture and transport their products. According to the Bow River Keeper, a citizens’ group that protects the Bow River watershed in Alberta, one quarter of the 89 billion litres of bottled water consumed every year are bought outside of the country where they are produced. The transportation of the bottles produces large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. The Bow River Keeper estimates that “the manufacturing and transport of a one kilogram bottle of Fiji water consumes 26.88 kilograms of water (7.1 gallons), 0.849 kilograms of fossil fuel (one litre or 0.26 gal), and emits 562 grams of greenhouse gases (1.2 pounds).”

## 3. Our landfills cannot support bottled water.

Canadian municipalities are dealing with a waste management crisis and our landfills cannot support the amount of garbage generated by the bottled water industry. According to a recent Toronto *Sun* article, “as few as 50 per

# ban bottled water

cent of the water bottles Torontonians consume everyday are actually being recycled. That means as many as 65 million empty plastic water bottles per year end up as garbage in a landfill waste site.” In some communities the percentage of water bottles that end up in landfills can be as high as 80 per cent.

## 4. Bottled water is not safer.

In order to persuade people to spend 200-3,000 times what they spend on tap water, bottled water companies advertise their products as a “safer and healthier alternative.” Nothing can be further from the truth. Bottled water is regulated as a food product under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. As such, water bottling plants are inspected on average only once every three years, according to the Polaris Institute, an Ottawa-based research organization. Tap water regulation, on the other hand, is far more stringent. Municipal tap water is tested continuously – both during and after treatment.

## 5. Water is a human right.

Around the world, there is a growing citizens’ movement working to establish a global “right to water,” affirming that water is an essential and irreplaceable resource for people’s health and for our planet as a whole. The Canadian government has been blocking recognition of the human right to water – an issue that affects billions of people who live without access to safe, clean water. Canada first took this position in 2002 in a vote at the Human Rights Commission. In March, our country confirmed its stance at the new Human Rights Council by leading the efforts to gut a resolution on the right to water. Water is a human right and should be guaranteed to all people regardless of their ability to pay.

The bottled water industry has worked hard to undermine our faith in public water. Canada has one of the best public drinking water systems in the world. Instead of high-priced bottled water, we need to work towards a National Water Policy that would improve the public water system, enshrine the human right to water in legislation, and ensure clean drinking water standards for all communities across the country.

## Take action!

Join the fight against bottled water. Visit [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org) to find out how you can get a bottled water ban in your municipality or at your school board.

### Sources and further reading

Barlow, Maude: *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2007

Arnold, Emily and Larsen, Janet: *Bottled Water: Pouring Resources Down the Drain* ([www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm](http://www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm))

Inside the Bottle campaign: [www.insidethebottle.org](http://www.insidethebottle.org)

India Resource Centre: [www.indiaresource.org](http://www.indiaresource.org)

Think Outside the Bottle campaign: [www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org](http://www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org)

Wellington Water Watchers: [www.wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca](http://www.wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca)

### Join the Council of Canadians

The strength of the Council is in its membership. The Council does not accept funding from corporations or from governments, so membership donations are vital to our activities. We work with community groups, seniors, students, unions and other organizations across the country to promote progressive policies on public health care, fair trade, secure energy, clean water and other issues of social and economic concern to Canadians. Visit [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org) or call us at **1-800-387-7177** to become a member today.

# Spinning the bottle:

## Tackling industry spin on bottled water

*The bottled water industry has worked hard to undermine our faith in public water despite the fact that Canada has one of the best public drinking water systems in the world. Communities across Canada are now questioning the extensive and damaging water-taking practices of for-profit bottling companies, and citizens are calling on municipal governments and school boards to stop selling bottled water. Bottled water corporations are now investing in massive public relations campaigns to counter these community efforts. Here are our responses to some of the myths you will hear from the industry.*

***They say: The bottled water industry uses a very small percentage of groundwater in Canada.***

***We say:*** Arguments regarding the overall amount of groundwater extracted by the bottled water industry fail to acknowledge the environmental impacts on individual watersheds caused by removing large amounts of water. For example, in Aberfoyle Ontario, Nestlé's extraction of 3.6 million litres per day is causing a reversal of groundwater flow to the Mill Creek. The argument also fails to take into account the three to five litres of water required to produce a one-litre plastic bottle. It also fails to recognize the large amounts of water drawn from other sources such as ancient glaciers, lakes, streams and rivers for shipment elsewhere.

***They say: The bottled water industry does not compete with public tap water.***

***We say:*** While Nestlé claims that "only 10 percent" of Canadian bottled water comes from municipal water systems, a much more significant portion was reported by the Canadian Bottled Water Association (CBWA). According to a 2007 *Maclean's* article, the industry trade group claims "filtered tap water accounts for more than one-quarter of bottled water consumed by Canadians." Coca-Cola's Dasani brand is municipal water from Calgary, Alberta and Brampton, Ontario, and Pepsi's Aquafina water comes from Vancouver, British Columbia and Mississauga, Ontario. Even still, focusing specifically on municipal supplies ignores the fact that no matter where the water comes from, the bottling process still drains freshwater resources at a time when Environment Canada warns of a looming freshwater crisis, and 20 per cent of our municipalities have faced water shortages in recent years.

***They say: If bottled water is not available, people will turn to less healthy alternatives.***

***We say:*** An increasing number of people are consciously choosing to avoid soft drinks. A recent study by the Euromonitor International reports a growing tendency for consumers, particularly baby boomers, to avoid carbonated beverages due to health concerns. They are not likely to turn to these beverages if bottled water becomes unavailable. Anyone looking for a drink can easily refill reusable bottles at taps or public fountains.

***They say: Banning bottled water in public facilities violates one's freedom of choice.***

***We say:*** Given the choice, it makes sense that people would want to drink free, clean, safe drinking water rather than pay for a higher-priced version. We are fighting to ensure that people truly do have a choice by ensuring access



to free municipal drinking water in public facilities. Bottled water should not be seen as a solution to poor access to water in schools and other public facilities. We collectively pay for municipal drinking water through our taxes and should not have to purchase water that does not go through the same stringent testing as tap water in public places. Municipal governments also shouldn't use public funds to purchase bottled water for municipal staff or public functions.

***They say: Bottled water contains less plastic than other products.***

**We say:** It is clear that bottled water is harmful to the environment. According to the Earth Policy Institute, manufacturing the 29 billion plastic bottles used for water in the United States each year requires the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of crude oil. Unlike tap water, bottled water is not produced locally, so energy is needed to pump, process, transport, and refrigerate the products. In the United States, the Pacific Institute estimates the annual fossil fuel footprint of bottled water consumption to be the equivalent of 50 million barrels of oil – enough to run 3 million cars for one year. Canada also imports a portion of the bottled water it consumes from other countries. According to Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Canadian imports of bottled water increased from \$25.6 million in 1996 to \$75 million in 2007. Drinking tap water is the only sure way to protect the environment.



***They say: Ninety-seven per cent of Canadians have access to recycling programs.***

**We say:** Anyone concerned with the environment knows that reducing and reusing are far more important than recycling. Bottled water bans are the outcome of a growing movement of people who are refusing to buy plastic packaging in the first place. Secondly, having access to recycling and actually recycling are not the same thing. According to a 2008 Toronto *Sun* article, “as few as 50 per cent of the water bottles Torontonians consume everyday are actually being recycled. That means as many as 65 million empty plastic water bottles per year end up as garbage in a landfill waste site.” While statistics vary from community to community, rejecting bottled water is the only way to truly eliminate impacts on our landfills and the environment.

***They say: Why focus on bottled water instead of soft drinks, juice and other beverages?***

**We say:** The issue isn't simply about packaging. Banning the sale and purchase of bottled water in public facilities is a way to reclaim the water commons. By challenging the bottled water industry, we are resisting the corporate takeover of a shared public resource. The Council of Canadians has focused its efforts on fighting for a national water policy that would improve the public system and ensure clean drinking water standards for all communities across the country. Water is a human right and should be guaranteed to all people regardless of their ability to pay.

## Take action!

Join the fight against bottled water. Visit [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org) to find out how you can get a bottled water ban in your municipality or at your school board.

# Sample letter to a school board

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Dear Trustees of the ( ) School Board:

We commend you for considering a ban on bottled water sales in your schools and would like you to consider the following facts:

## ***Bottled water contributes to climate change***

In an era when the world is dealing with the impacts of climate change, the bottled water industry requires massive amounts of fossil fuels to manufacture its product.

According to the Bow River Keeper, a citizens' group aimed at protecting the Bow River watershed, one quarter of the 89 billion litres of bottled water consumed every year is consumed outside the country of its origin. Hence the transportation of bottled water also produces large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Bow River Keeper estimates that "the manufacturing and transport of a one-kilogram bottle of Fiji water consumes 26.88 kilograms of water (7.1 gallons), 0.849 kilograms of fossil fuel (one litre or 0.26 gal), and emits 562 grams of greenhouse gases (1.2 pounds)."

## ***Our landfills cannot support bottled water***

Ontario is dealing with a waste management crisis and our landfills cannot support the amount of garbage generated by the bottled water industry. According to a recent Toronto Sun article, "as few as 50% of the water bottles Torontonians consume everyday are actually being recycled. That means as many as 65 million empty plastic water bottles per year end up as garbage in a landfill waste site."

## ***Bottled water is not safer***

Tap water in Canada is far more regulated than bottled water. The City of Toronto website, for example, states that Toronto water is tested continuously during and after treatment. In fact, the City of Toronto argues that it conducts more tests and on many more substances than required by regulation. The city takes drinking water samples every four hours to confirm the absence of bacteria.

## ***Our schools should be commercial-free***

Bottled water corporations are marketing water as the latest fashion trend for children. Council of Canadians chairperson Maude Barlow argues in her book *Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water* that the newest target audience for the bottled water industry is children. She writes, "Under pressure from parents and health advocates to remove sugar-based drinks from schools, companies have to compete with one another for bottled water brand loyalty, reports Brandweek. Nestlé is marketing Aquapod, shaped like a rocket and aimed at the six-to-twelve-year-old market. Aquapod's slogan is 'A blast of fun.' Ads for the product have hit DC Comic books, Nickelodeon and children's television shows."

It is important for schools to protect children from this sort of consumerism that turns our most precious resource into a commodity.

### ***Bottled water leads to water shortages***

In Canada, we are not immune to the growing threats of water scarcity. Twenty per cent of municipalities have faced shortages in recent years. Canada is a net exporter of bottled water, selling its ancient glacier waters all over the world mostly for the profit of the foreign-owned, multinational water companies. “Most provinces charge these companies next to nothing to extract this water from springs and aquifers, and whole watersheds are now under threat from this practice,” says Barlow.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, water shortages have been reported in the Great Lakes region near water bottling plants.

In Guelph, Ontario, a citizen’s coalition called the Wellington Water Watchers (WWW), has launched a campaign against Nestlé. The corporation’s water-taking of 3.6 million litres per day is causing a reversal of groundwater flow to the Mill Creek. In April 2008, the Ontario government renewed Nestlé’s permit for a period of two years. The WWW is hoping that by the time the permit expires, there will no longer be a demand for bottled water outside of emergency use.

The demand for bottled water is also contributing to the global water crisis. As a result of water shortages caused by Coca-Cola’s draining of groundwater resources in Plachimada, India, thousands have taken to the streets to demand the closure of the Coca-Cola plant in their community.

### ***Water is a human right***

The bottled water industry has worked hard to undermine our faith in public water. Canada has one of the best public drinking water systems in the world. Canada needs a national water policy that would improve the public water system and ensure clean drinking water standards for all communities across the country.

We hope the wonderful efforts to ban bottled water in schools across the country will also be coupled with educating children to address the global water crisis by caring for and promoting water as a public resource and a human right.

Sincerely,

*[Add signatures here]*

# Sample letter to a municipal councillor

Dear Councillor:

We are writing to urge you to join the growing number of municipalities banning the purchase and sale of disposable plastic water bottles in municipal facilities and at municipal events.

Water is a human right and we strongly oppose the bottled water industry's commodification of this public resource. In addition, the environmental and social costs of bottled water are enormous and a municipal ban will make a huge difference in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, eliminating waste from our crowded landfills, and in making our community an environmental leader in Canada.

In an era when the world is dealing with the impacts of climate change, the bottled water industry requires massive amounts of fossil fuels to manufacture its product. One quarter of the 89 billion litres of bottled water consumed every year is consumed outside the country of its origin. Hence the transportation of bottled water also produces large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

Bottled water also creates excessive amounts of physical waste when Ontario is dealing with a waste management crisis. Even in municipalities with strong recycling programs, bottled water is often consumed outside the home and bottles don't even make it into the recycling bins.

Furthermore, the costs and effort required to recycle single-use plastic bottles is unnecessary when we consider that municipal water-quality standards exceed those of the bottled water industry. As you know, municipal water undergoes far more stringent testing and regulation than bottled water.

We are also concerned about the role of bottled water in exacerbating the global water crisis. It takes three to five litres of water to manufacture a one-litre plastic bottle of water. Over one quarter of Canadian municipalities have faced water shortages in recent years. And yet Canada is a net exporter of bottled water, selling its ancient glacier waters all over the world mostly for the profit of foreign-owned multinational water companies. Most provinces charge these companies next to nothing to extract this water from springs and aquifers, and whole watersheds are now under threat from this practice.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, water shortages have been reported in the Great Lakes region near water bottling plants. In Guelph, a citizen's coalition called the Wellington Water Watchers has launched a campaign against Nestlé. The corporation's water-taking of 3.6 million litres per day is causing a reversal of groundwater flow to the Mill Creek.

The demand for bottled water has been carefully fostered by an industry that works hard to undermine our faith in public water. Nestlé, for instance, markets Aquapod, bottled water shaped like a rocket and aimed at the six-to-twelve-year-old market with the slogan the water is "A blast of fun." Ads for the product have hit DC Comic books, Nickelodeon and children's television shows. Nestlé spokesperson, John Challinor's claim that citizens will turn to unhealthy beverages if they can't buy bottled water is ludicrous. In reality, corporations like Nestlé have turned water into a commodity precisely because North Americans are turning away from unhealthy products.

A municipal bottled water ban would be an incentive to improve access to public drinking water in Canadian communities, and could complement a call on the federal government to ensure that municipalities are adequately funded to provide essential services.

As concerned citizens, we look forward to seeing our community protect the environment and promote water as a public resource by passing this very important resolution to ban the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities.

Sincerely,

*[Add signatures here]*

# Sample municipal resolution

(\*This resolution was passed by London, Ontario municipal council in August 2008, along with a timeline for implementation and further directions for accompanying studies and budget reports. To see the full municipal report, visit [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org))

That, on the recommendation of the Acting General Manager of Environmental & Engineering Services & City Engineer, the following actions be taken:

A) Municipal council **APPROVE** a resolution stating the following:

**WHEREAS** the Corporation of the City of London operates and maintains a regulated and sophisticated water distribution system that meets some of the most stringent water quality requirements in the world;

**WHEREAS** the regulatory requirements for monitoring water quality contained in bottled water are not as stringent as those that must be met by Corporation of the City of London;

**WHEREAS** The Corporation of the City of London delivers water to its residents and businesses that translates, on average, to about one-eighth of a cent per litre;

**WHEREAS** single-use bottled water sold in London is 230 to 3,000 times more expensive than water from the tap in London, even though estimates suggest that between 10% and 25% of the bottled water originates from municipal water systems;

**WHEREAS** resource extraction, packaging and distribution of single-use bottled water creates unnecessary air quality and climate change impacts and consumes unnecessary resources such as oil in the manufacture of plastic bottles and in the fuel used in the transportation of bottled water to the consumer;

**WHEREAS** single-use plastic bottles, although easily recycled through the City of London recycling program, approximately 60% are captured in the Blue Box Program and the rest end up in the garbage bag and ultimately delivered to the City's landfill site taking up unnecessary space without any further contribution to society;

**WHEREAS** single-use plastic bottles that are not recycled in the Blue Box program or placed in the garbage become litter in London's streets, parks and boulevards;

**WHEREAS** the cost of managing single-use plastic bottles along with other recyclable material in the Blue Box program, after material revenue, has been removed, is currently 35% paid by industry stewards and 65% paid by London taxpayers and when the single-use plastic bottles and other recyclable materials are sent to landfill industry stewards do not pay any of the costs;

**WHEREAS** City of London tap water is safe, healthy and accessible to Londoners and visitors, and substantially more sustainable than single-use bottled water;

**WHEREAS** City of London tap water is readily available at most indoor public facilities, either in the form of a faucet in a bathroom or drinking fountain and, where it is not readily available a plan be put in motion to increase access to municipal water subject to water quality and safety requirements, budget and other considerations;

**WHEREAS** a priority of London Municipal Council remains that where easy access to municipal tap water does not exist, the availability of bottled water is a very appropriate alternative;

**WHEREAS** the City Council wishes to set a positive example to the London community on environmental matters;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT a)** single-use bottled water will no longer be sold in the City Hall cafeteria, from City-owned or City administered concessions and vending machines in public facilities where easy access to municipal tap water exists; **b)** single-use bottled water will no longer be purchased and provided at meetings where easy access to municipal water exists; **c)** The availability of water jugs with municipal water will be increased, where required; **d)** a City staff and public awareness campaign be developed to support the rationale for these important changes including the need for Londoners to do their part; and **e)** the following implementation schedule be followed subject to an assessment that tap water is readily accessible at these locations.

# Checklist for implementing a bottled water ban in your community

## Have you:

- ✓ Checked to see if there are bottled water bans in your community?
- ✓ Gathered information about water bottling plants in your community?
- ✓ Found out what other groups may be working on a ban?
- ✓ Found support in the community and people who can work strategically with local companies?
- ✓ Contacted your local municipal councillor and school board trustee about securing a ban?
- ✓ Written a letter to the editor calling for a ban?
- ✓ Shared information with the public about how bottled water is a drain on local water resources and budgets?
- ✓ Contacted CUPE Ontario and the Council of Canadians for more information and resources to help you with your efforts?
- ✓ Visited [www.unbottleit.org](http://www.unbottleit.org)?



## Get in touch with us today!

Let us know about your efforts to secure a bottled water ban in your community.



[www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org) | 1-800-208-7156



[www.cupe.on.ca](http://www.cupe.on.ca) | 416-299-9739