

September 16, 2009

Ottawa Folk Festival: Went Unplugged and Unbottled!

Clean water is the foundation of the health and well being of every community. The Ottawa Folk Festival the first Ottawa Festival to say no to plastic water bottles and yes to public water!

Without the expertise, dedication, and generous support of our water partners, this initiative would certainly not have been possible. A heartfelt thank you to Ottawa Riverkeeper, CUPE, CUPE 503, Council of Canadians, The Water Store, and Life Without Plastics. We did it, folks!

Figures from The Water Store Hydration Station

(*Note that all festival Hydration Stations were replenished from this station starting Saturday morning):

Hydration Station Statistics

Date	Gallons	Litres	Users	Bottles saved
Aug.21	125	473	577	946
Aug.22	475	1798	2068	3596
Aug.23	409	1548	1850	3096
Total	1009	3819	4495	7638

Media coverage:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/Great+success+frugal+folkfest/1923213/story.html>

“The festival's water-bottle ban was also considered a success. Stainless-steel bottles were widely available, and close to 1,000 gallons of water were dispensed at the so-called hydration stations. According to water-station attendants, more than 7,000 plastic bottles were diverted from landfill sites.” - The Ottawa Citizen, Aug. 24 2009

<http://www.canadians.org/media/water/2009/17-Apr-09.html> - Council of Canadians, April 17 2009. (Also published in Ottawa Citizen Apr 20 2009. Link unable to be found)

Partner feedback:

“ I think OFF did a fantastic job with the water initiative and we were proud to be partners. Everyone we spoke with was very supportive of the initiative and I believe it was a win-win for everyone.” - Meredith Brown, Ottawa Riverkeeper Executive Director

“I just wanted to echo Meredith's statements about the water initiative - it went so well and everyone loved the idea! Saving 9,000 plastic bottles is quite an accomplishment. I hope that other festivals can use this as a case study for greening their own operations too. Thanks so much for inviting us to be an environmental partner. We're thrilled to support such a positive initiative - and of course, it helped us spread the word about Ottawa Riverkeeper too.” - Natasha Wilson, Ottawa Riverkeeper Communications Coordinator

“What a great event! All the staff and I had a great time....Thank you for your vision of going bottled water free!” - Paul Baker, The Water Store

Water Initiative Feedback from Festival-Goer Surveys (overwhelmingly positive comments. These are just a few of them)

“Excellent idea! I really think banning the sale of bottled water is a very positive step”

“I hope very festival follows this”

“The refill stations are a fantastic idea. Not only does it keep the garbage down, but I found it easier to stay well hydrated with so much easily accessible water”

“Great idea. Feels good to be a part of that”

Excerpts from 2009 Ottawa Folk Festival program guide:

In an effort to address water issues from multiple angles, we have partnered with the Ottawa Riverkeeper, Council of Canadians, CUPE, and CUPE 503 in a celebration of Ottawa public tap water. We are promoting a plastic water bottle free event and providing Hydration Stations and roving water crews to ensure you keep hydrated and that your bottles stay full. Why would we do such a thing?:

- Plastic water bottles are made from petroleum, a non-renewable resource.
- 90% of water bottles are never recycled and end up in landfills where they take thousands of years to degrade.
- Community watersheds in many communities (including our own) are facing many pressures from tourism, development, mining and other activities. This can only be addressed through cooperation and focus on the value of local drinking water.
- Every year over \$100 Billion Dollars is spent on bottled water worldwide. The United Nations estimates that if they had just 1/5 of that money for one year they could cut in HALF the number of people without clean water.
- The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) has rated the City of Ottawa’s drinking water as one of the safest in the world. Our water is clean...Drink up!
- By living water bottle free for just one full weekend at the festival, it is an opportunity for us all to think critically about how we live year round. You can do it all year too; many are jumping on board this train!

What can you do?:

- Most importantly, **bring a reusable water bottle and use our Hydration Stations.** Each station is staffed by Ottawa Riverkeeper, Council of Canadians, CUPE, and CUPE 503 to provide more info and answer questions. Check out the map in the program to find out the location of the Hydration Stations offering great water right from the Ottawa region.
- If you forget your bottle at home, pick up a stainless steel bottle at the Merch Tent.
- Thank all of the Green Team volunteers working hard to keep you hydrated, healthy, and happy.
- Maude Barlow (Senior Advisor to the United Nations on Water Issues) is with us to celebrate! Check out the festival program and attend her presentation on water issues.

We gratefully acknowledge all of our community partners and sponsors working with us to make this possible:

- The Ottawa Riverkeeper
- Council of Canadians
- CUPE
- CUPE 503
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- The Water Store