



June 13, 2008

Dear Trustees of the Toronto District School Board:

The Council of Canadians commends you for considering a ban on bottled water sales in your schools and would like you to consider the following facts:

### ***1) 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.

According to the Bow River Keeper, a citizens' group aimed at protecting the Bow River watershed, a 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 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)."

### ***2) 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."

### ***3) Bottled water is not safer***

Tap water in Canada is far more regulated than bottled water. The City of Toronto, website 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 six to confirm the absence of bacteria.

For information about the safety of water in Toronto, you may call the City of Toronto's Water Education Line at: 416-392-4546.

#### **4) 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 coveted commodity.

#### **5) 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. According to Maude Barlow, 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, big four 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," she argues.

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 on 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 2 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 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 that 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."

Furthermore, the manufacturing of water bottles requires vast amounts of water. It takes three to five litres of water for every one-litre bottle produced.

## 6) *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. 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 because we believe water is a human right and should be guaranteed to all people regardless of their ability to pay.

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.

**For more information, please contact:** Meera Karunanathan, national water campaigner for the Council of Canadians at: 613.233. 4487 ext 234 or by email at [meera@canadians.org](mailto:meera@canadians.org); [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org)

### **Sources and further reading:**

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

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)

City of Toronto Water: [www.toronto.ca/water](http://www.toronto.ca/water)

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)