

## Presentation to the City of Stratford ITS Sub-Committee

April 26, 2017

Thank you for hearing our presentation today. The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Stratford has been in Stratford for over 60 years. We have an active membership of 75 members and are part of the 8000 member national federation which comprise 100 communities across Canada. As a national organization, our policies include both reducing waste and protecting our water. I know that you have a copy of our initial presentation on hand so I won't take your time by reading it back to you verbatim. We would, however, like to stress the following points:

First, we would like to acknowledge the progress our City has made and the positions you have already taken with respect to having tap water available at all city meetings, the installation of a number of fountains and water filling stations, and the public open houses to demonstrate the treatment of our water.

We are here today to request that City Hall continue to actively promote Stratford tap water and to ban the sale and provision of single-use plastic water bottles at all municipal premises and functions, except in situations where potable water is not available and, of course, respecting individual choice.

Water is a necessity of life. Water is a human right and should be guaranteed to all people. It should never depend on someone's ability to pay - and yet the bottled water industry works hard to undermine our faith in public water. The CBC reports that bottled water costs 2000 times more to purchase than the rates charged for our municipal water which costs only about a tenth of a cent per litre. Stratford tap water is not only safe, it has one of the best public drinking water systems in the world! Tap water regulation is far more stringent than bottled water regulation. As you are more than aware, Municipal tap water is tested continuously – both during and after treatment as per your water compliance report referenced in the Town Crier of February 25<sup>th</sup> of this year.

Unlike Stratford tap water, there are many concerns regarding the safety of bottled water. A study by the American NDRC found that about 22% of brands tested contained chemicals above state health limits which could cause health issues with long-term use. The bottled water industry makes many claims for water safety. It is however, a self-policing industry and we are all aware of public health situations where self-regulation has had disastrous effect. Further the irony continues in reports from both Macleans and the CBC that between 25 and 45% of bottled water consumed is recycled municipal tap water. Bottled water companies are actually taking our tap water and packaging it in a petroleum product – a non-reusable plastic bottle - to sell back to us. The CBC reports that the longer these plastic water bottles are stored, the higher the concentration of harmful chemicals (specifically PET and BPA). It has long been understood that storing these bottles over 10 weeks will cause chemical leaching.

Notwithstanding the reliance on tap water for part of their water supply, bottled water corporations PUMP MILLIONS of liters of groundwater per DAY disrupting local ecosystems and ground water supplies of small communities. In Guelph, a citizen's coalition, the Wellington Water Watchers, has a campaign against Nestlé. Despite severe droughts, Nestlé is withdrawing millions of litres of water every day from an underground aquifer. Ground water is not renewable, when Nestle pumps an average of 3.6 million liters PER DAY, it is a concern because almost half of Canadians rely on groundwater and we have yet to map out how much we have left. According to the Earth Policy Institute, water shortages have now been reported in the Great Lakes region near water bottling plants.

Stratford, like all Canadian municipalities, continues to deal with waste management challenges and our landfills cannot support the amount of garbage generated by the bottled water industry. At the January 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 meeting of the Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, Kate Simpson reported that our existing landfill would be full in 25 – 30 years which she cautioned is not a long time in terms of planning and replacement. According to a recent 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.” In some communities the percentage of water bottles that end up in landfills can be as high as 80 per cent. Bottles used to package water take over 1,000 years to bio-degrade and if incinerated, they produce toxic fumes. Further, **recycling** plastic water bottles is also an expensive proposition. Single use plastic water bottles are an environmental disaster whether they are recycled or not.

The bottled water industry requires massive amounts of fossil fuels to manufacture and transport their products. While Nestlé, for instance, claims that their bottled water is distributed and sold primarily locally, there is evidence that their locally produced water bottles are found across the country. The transportation of these bottles produce large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

Manufacturing the water bottles themselves also requires huge amounts of water. The consensus is that it takes at least three litres of water to produce every one-litre plastic bottle. Further, if you imagine a water bottle filled a quarter of the way up with oil, that's about how much oil is required to produce the bottle.

Many cities and communities across Canada (including Toronto, Victoria, Vancouver, Niagara Falls, London), and many universities (including the University of Ottawa, Queen's University, Ryerson) have already taken the position of banning bottled water on their properties.

Just before concluding, I would like to mention that there are routinely the same comments made whenever banning single-use plastic water bottles is raised:

That people will have to resort to the far less healthy canned pop drinks if bottled water is not for sale. As a retired elementary school teacher, I can assure you that children are taught as early as grade one to avoid these sugar-in-a-can alternatives and they routinely bring their own reusable water bottles to school. There seems to be an increasing determination on the part of adults as well to avoid pop carbonated beverages and it is unlikely that they will resume their consumption of them. The object is to encourage re-usable water bottles and to provide a means for refilling them. We might review locations where additional water fountains and refill stations are required and perhaps even consider something like a water refill truck, complete with Stratford environmental branding, which could possibly circulate to large public events where needed.

Many Canadian cities have also gone a step further to become branded as "Blue Communities".

The Blue Communities Project is sponsored by the Council of Canadians and encourages municipalities to adopt a water commons framework by:

1. Recognizing water and sanitation as human rights.
2. Banning or phasing out the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities and at municipal events.
3. Promoting publicly financed, owned, and operated water and wastewater services.

We believe that Stratford almost certainly comes close to adhering to these criteria and could be nationally recognized as an environmentally forward “Blue Community”. It is very possible that we will have water wars within our lifetime. Let us act now. We reiterate our request that the City continue to actively promote the use of Stratford tap water and ban the sale and provision of single-use plastic water bottles from our municipality.

Thank you

Beverley Symons