



A Handbook for Awareness & Action on Bottled Water In Your School

Ever wondered...

- *Whether bottled water creates too much waste?*
- *Whether bottled water is truly pure & healthy?*
- *Whether there are reasons to be skeptical about bottled water advertisements?*
- *Whether water is a basic human right that should not be bottled and sold?*
- *Whether poverty and environmental problems can be linked to companies that privatize water?*

Or...

- *Why youth around the world are telling water companies to get out of their communities?*

Just Wasted...

Bottled water creates more garbage than most of us might ever imagine. First, to bottle one litre of bottled water, three litres of water are needed! Add to this the fact that every year, over 100 million barrels of oil are consumed to produce, transport and dispose of bottled water. These bottles release toxic chemicals and contaminants into the air and watersheds. It will be centuries before this waste decomposes!

Healthy Doubts...

If you listen to ads about bottled water, you might think it's the purest and healthiest drink on the planet? Between April 2008 and April 2009 only 6% of bottled water producers in Canada were inspected by health authorities. And what about tap water? Municipalities often test public water 24 hours a day, and conduct thousands of sample tests for bacteria every day. Bottled water is less regulated and tested than your tap water.

Still Thirsty...

Bottled water can be hundreds-or even thousands of times more expensive than tap water. Per litre, it is often more pricey than gasoline. Some brands, like Aquafina and Dasani, use water directly from the municipal tap water sources and sell it back to you at outrageous prices. So, is bottled water really worth it?

Ban The Bottle...Refresh Your School!

Across Canada, students, teachers, staff and school administrations are taking action to eliminate bottled water from schools. You can turn your school into a bottled water free zone! *Join the movement!*

Do You Take Access To Water For Granted?

Across Ontario, approximately forty First Nations communities do not have access to clean drinking water or functioning sewage systems. Water sources are so polluted that residents get rashes and blisters. For years, communities have been under permanent alerts to boil their water. This means that schools also do not have functioning water fountains with safe water to drink.

On an ongoing basis, residents have sought to bring their concerns to Parliamentary authorities, but their demands are continually met with silence. Communities are responding in different ways. Will you stand with them and support the call for access to affordable, clean public water? Check out: www.defendersoftheland.org

Bottled Water: Myths & Realities

Industry claims that bottled water is a legitimate use of public water and plastic water bottles are 100% recyclable.

The fact is...

More than 4 billion pounds of plastic water bottles go into landfills each year at an annual cost to cities of well over \$70 million a year. Fewer than 20 percent of plastic water bottles are recycled. However, the question of plastic recycling is only one environmental impact of bottled water production and consumption. The primary raw materials for plastic bottles are derived from crude oil. The extraction of these raw materials contributes to environmental degradation and dependence on scarce natural resources.

Industry claims that restricting bottled water will simply eliminate a healthy beverage option for consumers.

The fact is...

There is no evidence to suggest that without bottled water, students will consume more pop. It is better for people to drink water than soda, but tap water is a safe, more sustainable and more affordable option for most people. Beverage corporations work hard to get consumers to drink less tap water and more of the products they sell and profit from. Aren't these corporations that are now so concerned about healthy beverage choices the same corporations that have built fortunes on sugary sodas, milk chocolate candy bars and potato chips?

Industry claims that if schools ban bottled water, a student's right to choose which drink to purchase becomes limited.

The fact is...

Many schools have "Beverage Exclusivity Contracts". These agreements give corporations exclusive rights to determine what drinks are offered. Unfortunately, more vending machines in your school also usually means a reduction in the number of water fountains and a lack of funding for maintaining existing fountains. So, don't forget: keep alert about the state of water fountains at your school!

The Re-Fresh! Team at the Polaris Institute can supply you with bilingual fact sheets, posters, movie screening ideas, and letters to your administration. Talking to people about the issues is part of building momentum towards a bottle water free school! Contact us: Refresh@polarisinstitute.org or by phone: (613)237-1717

Bottled Water At Your School...Where to start?

Spread the Word!

Talk to classmates, friends, teachers and community members who would be interested and supportive. Raising awareness about bottled water concerns at your school can be easier if you approach a club at school, such as an environmental club. Schedule regular meetings at a time that everyone can agree on and develop a contact list so that everyone can keep up-to-date with what's going on.

Information is Key...

- Asking questions and gathering information are important steps to take when building a campaign at your school. Some key questions you might want to get answers for....
 - Does your school have a beverage exclusivity contract?
 - How many vending machines are there?
 - What bottled water products do they sell?
 - Do students and staff have access to water fountains or water refill stations (places to fill reusable bottles with tap water)? How many?
 - Are water fountains working properly or are they broken?

Get Moving! With the help of teachers and other students, you can create bottled water free zones in your school, starting in your classroom. Next, you can aim to make the hallways, the gym and the cafeteria bottle water free.

A **bottled water free zone** means that bottled water is not used in the classroom and that efforts are made to raise awareness about the impacts of bottled water.

You can also begin to ask your school administration to remove bottled water from vending machines, use pitchers of tap water at school events, and to install and maintain water fountains. You can even start a petition to gather signatures of students and teachers who would like your school to ban the sale of bottled water. The petition can be presented to your principal to share your concern about making the school completely bottle water free!

My School is already on the way to becoming bottled water free! What's next?

School boards across Canada are passing resolutions to make sure all the schools in their jurisdiction are bottle water free. Write to your trustee to find out if s/he will support a ban on bottled water, and will bring a motion forward to your school board. Questions? Email: Refresh@polarisinstitute.org