

Guide to Phasing out Bottled Water – Schools and School Boards



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October 2010



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You can find some Polaris High school resources here: <http://www.insidethebottle.org/re-fresh-re-jaillir>

1) Introduction

This guide is intended for students, teachers, trustees, board staff or other interested party who wishes to phase out the sale and purchase of bottled water in schools and school boards. Remember that these tips or suggestions are not exhaustive and there is always room for innovation. As well, every school and school board has its own quirks and differences, so some adaptation will be required.

Generally speaking, going ahead with a ban requires a holistic approach. Access, first and foremost, and Education are the two pillars of a phase-out. Without functioning water fountains it does not make sense to go all out and promote tap water and get rid of bottled water. Also educating students, teachers and staff about tap water VS bottled water is necessary and contributes to the culture change we are aiming for.

2) Assessing the Situation – What to Consider

- a. *The state of water fountains and water distribution infrastructure. Items to identify:*
 - i. Find out what contracts are in place for vending machines and cafeterias or beverage distribution such as the school boards beverage exclusivity contract (if applicable) or vending machine distribution contract. Keep in mind that this can be school level contract, but it is often a contract for the whole school board. By trying to contact the people at your school board that are responsible for procurement or vending machines or cafeterias, you should be able to get a hold of this information. If they do not want to disclose the information, a Freedom of Information Act request could be filed to access it. Items to identify:
 1. Nature of contract (terms, and conditions, who gets what)
 2. Duration, when is it renegotiated or renewed
 3. Where does bottled water fit into this contract
 - ii. Maintenance of water fountains: who often does custodial staff clean them? How often do they flush them? You can ask custodial staff or talk to facilities services (superintendent or other) to get information on this.
 - iii. Student perception of water fountains
 - iv. Assess financial implications (More relevant to board or school staff): losses from sales, costs of vending machines, or costs associated with renovations of water fountains
 - v. *Surveys/focus groups* - Assess where students, teacher, and staff stand on the issues around water safety and water privatization. Use a survey/focus group to evaluate the major concerns, questions, ideas that arise when discussing the possibility of phasing out bottled water.
- b. *Parties involved within the school board*

Ideally, all levels of stakeholders are involved in the process. Having a broad base of support helps move it forward efficiently. Stakeholders to consider:

- i. *Trustees*

- ii. *Environmental or social justice committee* (some boards have these)
- iii. *Superintendants or other board staff*: often people that are involved in environmental curriculum or other environmental initiatives can be of great support
- iv. *Principals*: Usually, barring contractual issues, individual schools can make the decision to push to phase out bottled water
- v. *Teachers*: Many are quite sensitive to environmental or social justice issues and are already involved
- vi. *Students*: environmental club, student council representatives, or other clubs
- vii. *Parents*: often boards/principals will listen to parents
- viii. *Environmental organizations*: Community groups or conservation authorities can help support a campaign around bottled water (ex: Polaris Institute)
- ix. *Union*: teachers unions will often support these initiatives

3) **Promoting and Campaigning for a Ban on Bottled Water**

a. *Where do we start?*

Here are some suggested steps to follow when starting a new campaign to phase out bottled water. Not all steps always apply.

- i. Establish broad objectives (endgame – ex: ban bottled water from School board)
- ii. Establish several smaller objectives that could lead to the broad objective
- iii. Assess situation (see above, section 2)
 - 1. What has been done?
 - 2. Where are things at?
- iv. Gather information on the issue, research facts, statistics around bottled water issues
- v. Take Action, inform, lobby, etc.

b. *Strategies*

Many strategies exist and others have yet to take form. You have to start somewhere. Oftentimes, context will help you determine what the next best step is. Always keep in mind what has been done, options, what should be done and what can realistically be done. Don't feel like you need to reinvent the wheel: Materials in French and English such as posters, toolkits, petition templates, etc. are available at www.insidethebottle.org and www.bottledwaterfreeday.ca

You will learn a lot regardless of the path you take and hopefully have some fun in the process! Here are some ideas:

- i. Writing a letter/ to a trustee or the whole board to request that bottled water be phased out (as a student, teacher or parent) or doing a presentation to the board of trustees
- ii. Writing a letter or making to your principal (as a student, teacher or parent)
- iii. Students can organize a petition
- iv. Inter-school cooperation (event, letter writing, petition)

- v. Create awareness raising events at your school (e.g., art, crafts, public event, debate, play, etc.), change the culture.
- vi. Call/email local media to tell them what you have been doing or are doing, talk about your campaign or an upcoming event. (e.g., write a letter to the editor)
- vii. Find out what your vending machine contracts are or if there is an exclusivity contract at your school or board. Some contracts apply to individual schools while some apply to the whole board. If you have trouble accessing such information you can likely use the Freedom of Information act to get it.
 - 1. In the case that there is a contract preventing the complete ban, discussions can be had with vendors to remove bottled water from vending machines for example and modify the contract. Some contracts stipulate that the signatories may have to wait until the contract is over to modify it; nevertheless, there may be loopholes in the contract that allow different timing of changes.
- viii. Create bottled water free zones in classrooms or other parts of your school/board office
- ix. Propose

4) **Planning and implementing a ban on bottled water**

Once a ban or motion is in place these are some of the things to consider:

- a. Phase the ban appropriately (timeline, targets and steps) to fit with the budget. This can span across several months or 1-2 years depending on situation. If renovations are required to water fountains they do need to be done quickly to ensure that students have access to free and good quality drinking water.
- b. Promotion: develop a plan to promote the ban to schools, staff, and students.
- c. Develop a policy, either within your environmental policy or a bottled water specific policy for procurement, events, sales, (An example of this is available in Appendix A)
- d. Speak with other school boards that have implemented a ban to get other ideas
- e. Implement a public tap water promotion campaign to accompany a ban
- f. Encourage integration of water issues in the curriculum

Appendix A – Sample policy



A-2009-01-1

ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

COMMERCIALLY BOTTLED WATER (Policy Statement: Commercially Bottled Water)

Purpose

The ALCD SB, in keeping with its stated mission to "... value and promote responsible participation in our local and global communities", consistent with the social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the goals of the EcoSchools initiative, seeks to model and promote stewardship practices with regard to the use of water.

References

You Love All That Exists ... All Things Are Yours, God, Lover of Life - A Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative, Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003

Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion, Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008

A Common Good ... an Inalienable Right, Papal Message for World Water Day 2007

2002 -2005 Fall Action Campaigns of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace Water – Not For Profit and, Carrying into the Share Lent Campaigns, Thirsting for Justice (<http://www.devp.org>)

Kairos (<http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/index.asp>)

Declaration of the United Nations - International Decade for Action Water for Life 2005–2015 (<http://www.worldwaterday.org/>)

EcoSchools (<http://schools.alcdsb.on.ca/ecoschools/default.aspx>)

Procedures

1. Commercially Bottled Water

- 1.1 The central Board and all satellite offices will promote at all meetings, workshops and special events, the consumption of water from local sources (municipal or wells) and eliminate the provision of water from commercially bottled, single-use plastic containers insofar as such municipal or well water sources are available.
- 1.2 Such promotion as stated in 1.1 will involve the maintenance of accessible water sources for all personnel and visitors.

- 1.3 The above will include the promotion of reusable containers for all personnel.
- 1.4 School sites shall follow the above practices. Changes to any contractual agreements with commercial vendors will be phased in as appropriate.
- 1.5 Fundraising activities in school communities shall be consistent with these practices.
- 1.6 Where schools and other Board sites have substituted other beverages which are made available to students and staff, such substitutions will comply with the Board's Nutrition Policy.
- 1.7 Where persons deem it necessary to bring to a school site water (or any other beverage) in a single-use container, and where the option of recycling of any such container is not available, persons will be encouraged to remove their containers from the site in order that they may be disposed of appropriately.
- 1.8 Any Board site may use water from commercial sources where access to safe, potable water has been compromised until such time as access to such sources can be restored and subject to the directives of local Medical Officers of Health and/or relevant government officials.

Appendices

Forms

Approved: January 27, 2009

Appendix B – Sample motions

Bottled water completely phased-out:

Avon Maitland District School Board

The Avon Maitland District School Board recommends that effective January 1, 2010 the purchase and/or sale of bottled water be prohibited on all Avon Maitland District School Board property, except where required for medical or emergency purposes.

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

Whereas, the HWDSB has a mandate to seek ways to reduce its environmental footprint,

And Whereas, safe and/or safer alternatives to the use of bottled water is readily available to the HWDSB,

And Whereas, the HWDSB should be setting an example to our students about stewardship of the earth,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees direct staff to develop a strategy to eliminate (with exceptions for reasons of health and safety) the purchase and sale of bottled water from administration buildings and elementary schools by September 2009, and to develop a strategy to eliminate (with exceptions for reasons of health and safety) the purchase and sales of bottled water from secondary schools by September 2010. In addition, make arrangements to recycle polystyrene as part of an integrated solid waste management strategy.

Partial restrictions or other types :

New Westminster School District 40

THAT the Board of Education for School District No. 40 (New Westminster) will direct staff to:

- 1. discontinue providing bottled water at public board meetings, conferences and other public events hosted by the school district;*
- 2. provide a report to the board on any existing contracts for bottled water with an intent to phase out these bottled water contracts*
- 3. provide a status of clean water fountains in the district;*
- 4. promote municipal water use as the preferred alternative to bottled water in single use bottles;*
- 5. make educational material available that promotes the benefits of municipal tap water use and explains the carbon footprint and health issues associated with single-use water bottles.*

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

A. THAT the OCDSB actively encourage the use of municipal water and/or reusable containers in place of non-reusable plastic water bottles; and

B. THAT staff be directed to report to a future Business Services Committee meeting with respect to development of an environmental policy and the degree to which this OCDSB encouragement has been successful.

Thames Valley District School Board

That the TVDSB reaffirms its commitment to being an active leader and corporate model for environmental responsibility as outlined in the TVDSB's Environmental Education and Management Program policy.

1. That the TVDSB seek to model and promote stewardship practices with regard to the use of water by ensuring that the Education Centre and all satellite offices will promote the consumption of water from local sources (municipal or wells) at all meetings, workshops and special events, and eliminate the provision of water from commercially bottled, single-use plastic containers insofar as such municipal or well water sources are available and determined to be safe.

2. That staff be instructed to review the current Environmental education and management program policy and procedure to ensure that it adequately reflects the important role of water stewardship.