

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - FEBRUARY 23, 2010

PROMOTION OF "BOTTLED WATER FREE DAY" – MARCH 11, 2010 WARDS 1 – 5

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works recommends that:

1. The City declare March 11, 2010 as "Bottled Water Free Day" in the City of Vaughan,
2. The Regional Municipality of York and the other Area Municipalities within York Region be requested to declare March 11, 2010 as "Bottled Water Free Day"; and,
3. The City promote this event on its website to encourage residents to drink municipal tap water whenever possible.

Contribution to Sustainability

Among the most significant concerns about bottled water, are the resources (energy and water) required to produce the plastic bottles and to deliver filled bottles to consumers. The Pacific Institute estimates that if you fill a one litre bottle of bottled water one quarter full of oil, you have illustrated the energy embedded (production and recycling) in the use of that bottle. It also estimates that three litres of water are required for every bottle of bottled water produced. Further, the bottled water industry relies on trucks to transport the products to the final markets. This use of fossil fuels contributes to greenhouse gases and global warming.

By promoting the concept of a bottled water free day, the City is bringing to light the environmental issues surrounding the use of bottled water, and can promote the use of municipal tap water to its residents.

Economic Impact

There are no economic impacts associated with the recommendations contained in this report.

Communications Plan

It is recommended that the City promote the March 11, 2010, "Bottled Water Free Day", on its web site, and internally to all City employees.

Purpose

To promote the use of municipal tap water through declaring March 11, 2010 as "Bottled Water Free Day" in the City of Vaughan.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Sierra Youth Coalition, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Polaris Institute, have combined resources to develop an educational program concerning the use of bottled water. In doing so, they are promoting March 11, 2010, as the first "Bottled Water Free Day" in Canada.

Council previously approved the following recommendation with respect to the promotion of municipal tap water and the banning of unflavoured bottled water in its facilities:

A.

1. *As the City has received a 100.0% rating in the recent inspection of the City's drinking water systems by the Ministry of the Environment, municipal tap water is to be promoted as a safe and economical means of obtaining drinking water;*
2. *Unflavoured bottled water no longer be sold in any City owned community centre upon the expiration of contract RFP07-050 on August 31, 2010;*
3. *Upon the opening of the new Civic Centre cafeteria, unflavoured bottled water not be sold in the new Civic Centre;*
4. *The Building & Facilities Department continue with their ongoing program of installing refrigerated drinking fountains, complete with water bottle filling spouts, in all municipal buildings to promote the consumption of municipal tap water;*
5. *The use of the stand-alone water coolers that are not connected to a municipal water supply, be removed from all municipal offices and/or work areas no later than June 1, 2009, unless potable water is not available in that particular building; and,*
6. *That all City employees be provided with a stainless steel refillable water bottle to promote the consumption of municipal tap water, funded through reduced operating budget expenditures for contracted bottled water supply.*

In addition, Council also adopted the following resolution at the same meeting:

Whereas the municipalities across Ontario are in the business of supplying safe, tested, and economical drinking water to its residents and businesses; and,

Whereas the cost for bottled water can be 240 – 3,000 times the price of municipal tap water; and,

Whereas approximately 40% of all single use plastic water bottles end up in landfill, and are not recycled through blue box programs; and

Whereas a significant amount of roadside litter is often found to be single use plastic bottles; and

Whereas the fossil fuels used to generate the millions of single use plastic bottles has significant environmental and resource depletion impacts; and

Whereas the Province has already set a precedent by requiring a deposit return system be implemented for glass wine and spirit bottles;

Therefore, be it resolved that

1. *The Province of Ontario be formally requested to require all manufacturers and producers of products using single use polyethylene terephthalate (PET), and other types of plastic bottles, to implement a deposit return system for all such products;*
2. *That upon the implementation of such a deposit return system, the Province amend Regulation 101/94 such that single use (PET), and other types of single use plastic bottles, be specifically identified as a product that is not required to be collected in municipal blue box collection programs in Ontario;*
3. *That the City Clerk circulate this resolution through the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), seeking their support for such a deposit return system to be implemented.*

4. That such a deposit return system be implemented no later than January 1, 2011.

As per the recommendations adopted by Council, all City staff were provided refillable water bottles to use in place of bottled water. This, and the other measures recommended in the report, were implemented out of concerns for the environment and the detrimental impact that single use water bottles have on the environment, not to mention the potential environmental issues created when water bottling companies take large amounts of water from groundwater sources. (For greater details on these environmental impacts, please refer to the April 14, 2009, report to the Environment Committee).

The organizers of the "Bottled Water Free Day" have indicated that there are over 70 municipalities, 6 school boards and 3 campuses that have successfully phased out the provision and sale of bottled water in their sectors. The City of Vaughan is one of these.

Given Council's previous stand on bottled water, and its commitment to promoting the use of municipal tap water whenever possible, it would be appropriate to declare March 11, 2010 "Bottled Water Free Day" in the City of Vaughan, and promote this event on the City's website.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and ties into Vaughan Vision 2020 Goal of Service Excellence, and Objective of "Lead and Promote Environmental Sustainability."

Regional Implications

The City of Vaughan purchases its municipal tap water from the Region of York and distributes potable water to consumers in Vaughan through the City's network of water mains. By promoting March 11, 2010 as Bottled Water Free Day, the Region would be highlighting to its residents the concerns regarding bottled water use and promoting the use of municipal tap water across the Region.

Conclusion

One of the primary goals of Vaughan Vision 2020 is for the City to lead and promote environmental sustainability. Declaring March 11, 2010 as "Bottled Water Free Day" is a responsible initiative in pursuit of that goal. This initiative has a direct connection to the sustainability principals embodied in Green Directions Vaughan – The Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan through actions associated with efficient water use and waste reduction.

Corporate Communications, along with Public Works, will develop a communications awareness strategy to inform staff and the public of this initiative to promote the use of municipal tap water and reducing materials going to landfill.

Attachments

Promotional brochure (1 page)

Report prepared by:

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Respectfully submitted,

Bill Robinson, P. Eng
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works

Brian T. Anthony, CRS-S, C. Tech
Director of Public Works



Dear Councillor,

As a councillor in one of the 75 Canadian municipalities that have restricted bottled water, we are writing you today to help spread the word.

On behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students, the Sierra Youth Coalition, and the Polaris Institute we're contacting you in the countdown to Canada's first Bottled Water Free Day! On March 11 2010, campuses and communities across Canada will be mobilizing to take action to ban the bottle and reclaim public water. We want you to be a part of it!

We want to invite you to become a Friend of Bottled Water Free Day by committing to the following pledge: "I pledge not to drink bottled water where public water is available."

What does endorsing Bottled Water Free Day entail?

By endorsing the day you are committing to the pledge. As an individual or an organization you will be listed as a Friend on www.bottledwaterfreeday.ca

How can we play an active role in Bottled Water Free Day?

- Encourage your members, networks, friends and colleagues to sign the pledge at www.bottledwaterfreeday.ca
- Organize an event in the build-up to and on Bottled Water Free Day. Materials and ideas are available at the website.
- Put forward a resolution asking your municipality to formally endorse Bottled Water Free Day.

Where can we find more information?

- Information and materials on the campaign are available at www.bottledwaterfreeday.ca

We hope you will join us and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Fiona Clifford – campaignsintern@polarisinstitute.org – 613-237-1717 x106

On behalf of:

Polaris Institute, Canadian Federation of Students, Sierra Youth Coalition

