



Nestlé Should Not Be First in Line for Water

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Not long ago, bottled water was a small niche market selling mostly imported mineral water in glass bottles as an occasional luxury. But clever advertising turned it into a multi-billion dollar industry that is depleting community aquifers and producing a staggering amount of plastic waste.

The tide is turning though.

Nestlé, the world's largest bottled water company, is facing a groundswell of opposition worldwide. In Canada, thanks to your generous support, the Council of Canadians has been leading the challenge against Nestlé.

- Cities in California, Oregon, Maine, Michigan, British Columbia and Ontario are trying to limit the exploitation of their groundwater reserves by Nestlé and other water bottlers.
- More than 50,000 people have signed a Council of Canadians' pledge to boycott Nestlé bottled water and other products.
- The Council's Blue Communities Project – municipal designations recognizing the support of the human right to water, public water services and rejecting bottled water – are forming worldwide, even in Switzerland, Nestlé's own backyard!
- The World Council of Churches has banned bottled water from churches.
- In Ontario, public pressure has caused the provincial government to change the rules for bottled water permits.

Awareness about the problems with bottled water is growing, and not a moment too soon!

There are significant impacts at the source where the groundwater is pumped out. Aquifers replenish very slowly and shipping

bottled water away from the aquifer means it can never return to recharge it, unlike with most other groundwater uses. Earlier this year, Council of Canadians chapter members found Nestlé bottled water from Aberfoyle, Ontario for sale as far away as St. John's, Newfoundland – 3,147 kilometres from the source of the water. And Nestlé bottled water from Hope, B.C. (Nestlé's only other bottling plant in Canada) was found for sale by chapter members as far away as Yellowknife (2,126 km) and Winnipeg (2,144 km).

About 1500 ml of water must be extracted to produce a 500 ml bottle of water. The energy wasted producing, filling and shipping that same bottle is equivalent to approximately 125 ml of oil. In contrast, municipal tap water is available in most communities without the same waste or pollution.

The next two years will be critical in Ontario as Nestlé seeks permit renewals for all three of its wells, which allow the company to pump out almost 6 million litres of water per day.

In April, the Ontario government announced modest changes to how bottled water companies are regulated in the province. Ontario said it would:

- Reduce the maximum length of permits for bottled water companies from 10 years to 5 years.

- Implement a mandatory 10 to 30 per cent reduction for water taking during drought.
- Increase Indigenous and public notification, consultation and reporting processes. The government failed to say that community consent would be required for bottled water permits to be issued.

This falls well short of the demands made by more than 10,000 Council of Canadians supporters like you who called for a permanent moratorium on new permits, a phase out of current bottled water permits, and the recognition of the right to free, prior and informed consent for affected Indigenous peoples.

People and communities should not have to wait in line for water behind mega-corporations like Nestlé.

If you haven't done so already, please add your name to our online Boycott Nestlé pledge at canadians.org/nestle.

