

## **Briefing Document for Michael Di Grappa Sent on July 7, 2010**

Dear Mr. Di Grappa,

Bottled water is one of the most energy intensive, water intensive, waste producing products on the market. In the majority of circumstances it is completely unnecessary.

### **Environmental Impact:**

- In an era when the world is dealing with the impacts of climate change, the bottled water industry requires massive amounts of fossil fuels to manufacture.
- Production of the polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles, derived from crude oil, emits toxins into the atmosphere, contributing to air pollution.
- North American demand for bottled water requires more than 17 million barrels of oil annually.
- Twice as much water is used in the production than what is sold in the bottle – so when you consume one bottle of water you are really consuming three times that amount.
- Massive amounts of water are also used in production - approximately twice the amount of water in each bottle is used per bottle.
- Fossil fuels are also consumed in the transportation of bottled water, whereas tap water is circulated within the same watershed, with comparatively minimal environmental impact.
- Many plastic bottles end up in landfills, leaching phthalate toxins into our soil and contaminating groundwater.
- In 2002 there was an average recovery rate of only 48% for all plastic beverage containers in Canada.
- At Concordia, the 2009 university-wide waste audit concluded that over 2 million water bottles were disposed of on Concordia's campus in 2008-2009; this equates to around 43 bottles per campus community member per year. Less than 10% of bottles are recycled. Recycling all of those bottles every year would cost Concordia almost \$16,000.

A non-exclusive contract with a 30% set-aside for locally supplied products would create an opportunity for local suppliers to share space in the vending machines and beverage outlets on campus. Many local suppliers continue to use glass bottles and produce health conscious products that are a viable alternative to bottled water and Pepsi in plastic bottles.

### **Health Issues:**

- Bottled water has been vigorously advertised as a cleaner, safer, healthier alternative to tap water, but the reality is quite the opposite.

- Bottled water plants are inspected on average once every 3 years; tap water is regulated and inspected multiple times daily.
- The Natural Resources Defence Council conducted a four-year review of the bottled water industry and the safety standards that govern it. About 22 percent of the brands of bottled water tested contained, in at least one sample, chemical contaminants at levels above strict state health limits. Among these contaminants were arsenic, chloroform and nitrates.
- There are concerns over the leaching of phthalate chemicals from the petroleum based plastic bottle into the water it contains. Studies have shown that these chemicals, which are known to disrupt testosterone and other hormones, can leach into bottled water over time.
- Although there are regulatory standards limiting phthalates in tap water, there are no legal limits for phthalates in bottled water - the bottled water industry waged a successful campaign opposing the FDA proposal to set a legal limit for these chemicals.
- *In a recent study executed by the microbiology laboratory at C-crest Laboratories in Montreal 70% of bottled water tested contained bacterial contamination in excess of limits for drinking water specified by the U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention (USP).*

#### **Socio-Economic Concerns:**

- The bottled water industry has made a concerted effort to marr the reputation of its competition. As Susan Wellington, President of the Quaker Oats Company's United States beverage division, has so eloquently put, *“When we’re done, tap water will be relegated to showers and washing dishes.”*
- *Bottled water is one of the main manifestations of water privatization in North America. It supports a system whereby people must be able to afford to buy potable water, a necessity to life.*
- Water is widely recognized as a human and ecological right. The commodification of water by the bottled water industry is directly in conflict with this ideal.
- The bottled water industry has shown little regard for the integrity of the water sources they co-opt, or the towns in which they set up shop. In Fryeburg, Maine, for example, Nestlé’s Poland Springs continued to pump and truck water out own town during a 2004 drought while residents had to boil drinking water for days due to water pump failure.
- Concordia students, staff and faculty are not immune to the growing threats of water scarcity in Canada as twenty per cent of Canadian municipalities have faced shortages in recent years.
- Three prominent water bottling plants line the outskirts of Montreal (Pepsi-Cola, St. Laurent; Coca-Cola, Lachine; and Coca-Cola, Anjou) all of which place stress on water resources.

#### **The Movement:**

- *The movement towards free, accessible public water is growing nation-wide.*

- *At present there are 79 municipalities (from 8 provinces and 2 territories), 7 school boards, 7 universities and colleges and 1 province that have announced restrictions on bottled water.*
- *A number of associations, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), have encouraged their members to restrict bottled water.*
- *The Environmental Advisory Committee, the Concordia Student Union, Sustainable Concordia, QPIRG Concordia and TAPthirst are just a few of the organizations at Concordia which actively support a ban on the sale and provision of bottled water.*
- *There is growing support from Concordia's faculties towards a bottled water free Concordia and the negotiation of a better beverage contract on the whole.*

Despite being a leader in sustainability, Concordia University is currently selling and promoting the use of bottled water on campus. Water is widely recognized as a human and ecological right, and Concordia University should act now to ensure that our campus supports the international movement for water security by taking on initiatives against bottled water.

With the expiration of Concordia's exclusivity contract with Pepsico in December 2010, Concordia has a unique opportunity to negotiate a new beverage contract which will ensure the removal of bottled water from all vending machines and beverage outlets on campus. It is also an excellent opportunity for the application of the University's Environmental Policy, specifically the commitment made on page 2, paragraph 5:

“Wherever feasible in terms of financing, sourcing and availability, the University shall attempt to purchase goods that are ecologically benign, including items that are energy efficient, locally produced, made from post-consumer recycled and/or renewable materials, are recyclable, non-toxic and/or organic, should they meet or exceed the requirements as specified by the departmental end users. The University shall also work to consider life cycle costs and impacts when assessing products and equipment for procurement and, when possible, will tender to suppliers that are local and/or committed to environmental sustainability.”

Thank you for taking the time to read over this information. Please let me know if you have any further questions or concerns regarding the bottled water industry, or the campaign towards a bottled water free Concordia and a better beverage contract.

Sincerely,

Laura Beach  
 Co-Founder TAPthirst  
 Intern, Concordia Food Systems Project