

- Nov 24, 2010 - 12:09 PM

Water bottle's damage starts before landfill

I was completely infuriated with the comments from John Challinor of Nestlé Waters Canada (the Post, Nov. 17).

He has completely missed the point on why bottled water is so damaging. Let me educate him.

1. Most plastic is made from oil or natural gas. That oil is miles underground (sometimes under a mile of ocean, as well) so it has to be pumped to the surface where it is transported to a refinery and then transported further to a factory to be made into a virgin plastic. The virgin plastic is then transported again to a bottle-making facility.

How much greenhouse gas has been generated in all of the manufacturing and transporting so far?

Would Mr. Challinor like to disclose what percentage of virgin plastic is used in his bottles?

2. The bottle is made in the factory and then transported to the bottling facility. Unfortunately, due to the shape, you can't flat pack the bottles — like Tetra Paks, for instance — so the bulk of the volume during this transportation is air.

3. The bottle is filled with water at the bottling facility and then transported to a distribution facility.

4. The bottle would then be transported to a city facility where it will be refrigerated until it is bought. How much energy goes into that refrigeration?

5. Now you buy it for \$2. Ask yourself how much money Nestlé makes off of that price considering there is only one ingredient in bottled water. You're paying for their huge marketing campaign to convince you to drink it.

6. You enjoy the water for around 15 minutes to a half-hour.

7. About 60-80 per cent of these bottles are then thrown in the garbage. Stats vary on how many plastic bottles are recycled, but even 10 per cent is too few given that they are unnecessary.

8. Now that plastic bottle heads to the dump. As much as 50 per cent of that wasted plastic will end up in the ocean, for example, in the North Pacific Gyre. That plastic in the ocean is sometimes mistaken by birds and fish as food and some is fed to their young.

If it does end up in the dump, it slowly leaches toxic chemicals into the ground that will eventually make it into the ground water or plants. The chemicals have to go somewhere, they can't just go away.

None of this takes into account the paper in the label, the ink on the label, the plastic wrap around the bottle packs and all the associated manufacturing and distribution.

What about the caps? Making the bottle thinner or the cap smaller doesn't get rid of the problem.

All of this just because it was easier than turning on a tap and fill up a glass or reusable bottle.

The point is that all of this can be avoided without reducing choice because water is readily available. Soft drinks don't come into every building on the continent through a pipe.

I'm OK with you wanting to sell water. That's your right. And if people know all the facts and still purchase your product then that's OK, too.

But you aren't forthcoming about your product and you have a lot of nerve using the Burlington Post to get your marketing message across.

Let's be clear. You're in the business of marketing not water making. You manufacture want for your product with overstated health scare tactics and by understating the damage that your product does to the environment and to everyone on the planet.

Bottled water is not a sustainable industry, and no it's not the only one. But Mr. Challinor is the only one I know in the industry trying to defend it in the editorial section of the city I live in.

Mr. Challinor, feel free to contact me to discuss. The Post has my e-mail address.

Derek Jenkins, Burlington