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## Thirsty? Try the tap

### City-run facilities no longer selling bottled water

Local residents are going to want to remember to pack their reusable water bottles the next time they head out to a city arena or recreation centre.

The city has implemented a ban on selling bottled water products at most city buildings where drinking water is readily available.

The initiative came into effect on Nov. 1, meaning that people won't be able to buy bottled water, bottled flavoured water or bottled vitamin-enhanced water at those sites.

#### Tap water is safe

"Over the years, we've been led to believe that the water that comes out of a tap isn't safe and that bottled water is a safer product, and that is not true — Ontario has some of the highest drinking water standards in the world," said Sean Kenney, waste diversion co-ordinator with the city.

The move is expected to divert thousands of single-use water bottles from the region's landfill and reduce greenhouse gas emissions created through manufacturing and transporting single-use water bottles.

"There's an environmental cost to having plastic bottles," Kenney said. "You are now finding that at home, people are recycling about 60 per cent of their waste, but when you get out to city facilities, it is probably less than 10 per cent, so those end up in the trash."

Bottled pop and juice will continue to be sold at concession stands and vending machines at city facilities.

City staff is considering selling reusable water bottles at concession stands at some facilities.

City council in April 2009 directed staff to create an implementation plan for a bottled water ban in city facilities.

The initiative carries an approximately \$65,000 price tag for the city. This includes approximately \$50,000 in upgrading close to 35 water fountains so that they also have a water bottle filler.

The budget also includes a \$15,000 marketing campaign called Thirsty? Try the tap, aimed at informing people of the ban.

"We've done 11 fountains at city hall and 19 fountains at various other city recreation facilities, then we are adding three more to the collegiate pools," said Kenney.

A handful of city venues will still sell bottled water, such as Tyandaga Municipal Golf Course, Beachway Park and rural area city buildings where there is limited direct access to drinking water.

"At Beachway Park, we're still going to sell bottled water because people do need to drink water, especially in hot weather," Kenney said.

Buildings that provide third-party catering and retail service, such as the Discovery Centre, Paletta Mansion and LaSalle Park Pavilion, will be exempt from the ban until current contracts expire.

Kenney said that some of the contracts at the exempt venues end as early as next year, with others running until 2015. However, he said staff at the exempt facilities has been co-operative in supplying pitchers of water at booked events when bottled water isn't specified.

Facility users are expected to get on board with the ban, especially as other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area look at enforcing similar restrictions in municipal buildings, Kenney said.

"I don't think it is going to be too difficult, because if you go around to area municipalities, the ban on bottled water is happening all over the place," he said.

BurlingtonGreen applauds the change, which they have been lobbying for, said Amy Schnurr, the group's executive director.

"We think it is great leadership that the City of Burlington will ban bottled water, including flavoured water, from all of their city facilities and we hope the school boards will follow suit and do the same thing in the schools," she told the Post.

Schnurr said that it doesn't make sense to rely on bottled water when Burlington has safe drinking water.

"Our water is perfectly safe to drink — there are people on the planet who do not have clean, drinkable water and there is no need for us to be purchasing single-use plastic bottled water," she said. "There's also the whole manufacturing process. A petroleum-based product is used to produce the plastic bottles; to fill the water bottles, to transport them and truck them and package them and get them from the source to our mouths is completely unnecessary."

Kenney said the city is now considering whether it is feasible to add water bottle spouts to the approximately 22 outdoor water fountains at city parks. A pilot project is expected in summer 2011, he added.

"Outdoors does lend itself to be a little bit more difficult to do. One is because of the environment — they have to be shut down and easily winterized, but we are looking to do it at test sites, particularly at one of the new parks they'll be opening on Tim Dobbie Drive and Dundas (Street)," he said. "Right now we're trying to come up with a bottle filler fountain that is vandal-resistant because we have found that fountains in our parks tend to be highly vandalized or misused."