

HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD BOTTLED WATER REPORT

PURPOSE: This report is for approval by the Governing Board following a request at the February 29, 2012, Regular Board meeting on the impact of eliminating the sale of bottled water from HRSB schools.

BUSINESS PLAN GOAL: n/a

BACKGROUND: The Governing Board requested a staff report at the February 29, 2012, Regular Board meeting on the impact of eliminating the sale of bottled water in HRSB schools. This request followed a public presentation by students requesting the Board “Ban the Bottle.”

CONTENT: Staff researched the impact of this request.

This research included:

- a review of the bottled water policies of other municipalities, boards, and governments;
- access of safe municipal water in schools and the state of water fountains in schools;
- impact on cafeteria and vending machine contracts;
- student hydration requirements; and
- impact of fundraising from bottle recycling.

Presently, 28 municipalities, 12 colleges/universities and 4 school boards have approved bottled water bans. In addition, 120 municipalities, school boards and universities across Canada have rejected bottled water bans, and 19 are currently reviewing their options.

Individual schools in the HRSB have independent contracts with cafeterias and vending machines. It would be challenging to eliminate the sale of bottled water from schools considering the number and variety of contracts.

Water fountains are present in most HRSB schools but are expensive to maintain and are not always favored by students. An alternative to the traditional water fountain are water filling stations. This is a filtered water cooler device where students can fill their refillable water bottles. Such a station is currently being investigated in Dartmouth High.

At many HRSB schools, bottle recycling is part of school fundraising. The impact of the loss of revenue for these schools is another consideration for the Board.

Approximately 9 HRSB schools do not have access to safe municipal water. These schools depend on bottled water.

Finally, the Board must consider the need for adequate student hydration in schools. There is often insufficient water fountains to

meet the generally accepted hydration requirement of 8-10 glasses of water per day. Research from the Toronto District School Board in 2009 indicates that the majority of students who normally purchase bottled water will either choose to drink nothing or substitute a less healthy option if bottled water is not available.

The HRSB understands that eliminating the sale of bottled water is a pressing environmental concern. However, with 137 schools in the Board, we have unique considerations at different schools. As a result, we recommend that individual schools are best positioned to make the decision on whether to eliminate bottled water at their site. Individual schools are also the best places to commit to the process of changing the culture of bottled water. We are encouraged that several schools in the HRSB have already “banned” the sale of bottle water.

Possible future steps and considerations:

- support schools efforts as they continue to educate students about the benefits of municipal tap water use and the importance of environmental responsibilities; and
- eliminate the use of bottled water at Board meetings.

COST: n/a

FUNDING: n/a.

TIMELINE: Following Board approval.

APPENDICES: n/a

RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the Governing Board give individual schools the authority to make their own decision regarding whether the sale of bottled water will be eliminated from their site.

COMMUNICATION:

COMMUNICATIONS: AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
Principals	Danielle McNeil-Hessian, Director School Administration	Following Board approval
HRSB Communications	Doug Hadley, Coordinator Communications	Following Board approval

From: *For further information please contact Selena Henderson, Corporate Secretary at shenderson@hrrsb.ns.ca or 464-2000, ext. 2324.*