

Date: August 23, 2013  
RE: Bottled Water Ban

Dear AASHE STARS Program Staff:

This letter is being submitted in support of Niagara College's STARS documentation for an Innovation credit. The 2012 Day of Reflection, a day designed for Niagara College employees to reflect on the academic year, was themed around sustainability. Student volunteers surveyed attendees on how the transportation methods they used to get to the event, in which a carbon footprint was then calculated. As co-chair of the Sustainability Committee, I also did a presentation on sustainability at Niagara College and the sustainability targets the college has set out with the intention of engaging and providing awareness to the employee body. The college was also honoured to have Maude Barlow as a key note speaker. As the National Chair of the Council of Canadians, Maude spoke to the global water crisis and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. During a sustainability brainstorming session following Maude's address, Niagara College employees were asked to coming up with ideas how to make Niagara College more sustainable. The overwhelming response was to ban bottled water. While banning bottled water has the obvious benefit of reducing waste from plastic bottles, it was important that Niagara College supports the notion that everyone has the right – not the privilege – to clean drinking water, and that water should not be sold as a commodity. In July 2012 it was approved by the Executive Team and the bottled water was off the shelves by the start of the academic year in September.

To ensure all students and employees have access to clean, free drinking water, the Welland campus has installed a total of 18 hydrations stations and 18 water spigots have been retrofitted on to existing fountains at the Welland Campus and Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus. All new students and employees are provided a re-usable water bottle during orientation and Niagara College also has an ongoing campaign titled "BYOrB" (bring your own reusable bottle). This campaign is aimed at education students and employees about the quality of drinking water in Ontario, including the Safe Drinking Water Act as well as other negative environmental, social and economic impacts related to the sale of bottled water.

The bottled water ban is just one example of the many projects Niagara College has implanted to further sustainability in the higher education sector and as co-chair of the Sustainability Committee I look forward to advancing sustainability even further.

Sincerely,

Al Unwin  
Academic Chair  
School of Environment & Horticulture  
Niagara College Canada