

NO: **R161**

COUNCIL DATE: **September 14, 2009**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **September 9, 2009**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **5600-28**

SUBJECT: **Tap Water Declaration**

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse the Metro Vancouver Tap Water Campaign Declaration, with the resolution section of the Declaration amended to read as follows:

“Now therefore be it resolved that the City of Surrey will:

- (a) Seek to phase out municipal use of bottled water, limit the availability of bottled water in municipal facilities and will promote the importance of municipal water; and
- (b) Wherever possible and appropriate, encourage the installation of accessible drinking fountains in new and refurbished buildings as well as in new and refurbished parks and other public spaces.”

; and

3. Request that the City Clerk forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as information.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council endorsement of a Tap Water Declaration.

BACKGROUND

Council requested a report from staff regarding a letter, dated November 4, 2008 (see Appendix I), from the Chair - Metro Vancouver Board that encouraged the City of Surrey to adopt the Metro Vancouver Tap Water Declaration (the “Declaration”) (see Appendix II).

At its Regular meeting on June 2, 2009, Council referred to the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) a delegation request from Kyle Kijowski of TAP IN. TAP IN is a group of

students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University that are campaigning to reduce the use of bottled water. Representatives of the TAP IN group appeared before the EAC on July 15, 2009. Based on the information they presented at that time, the group has similar objectives to those articulated in the Metro Vancouver Tap Water Campaign Declaration. The EAC supported TAP IN's position and suggested that they make their presentation to Metro Vancouver. They further suggested that the City lead by example by endorsing the Tap Water Declaration and following through accordingly.

DISCUSSION

Water supplied by Metro Vancouver and distributed by the City of Surrey is of high quality, safe to drink and available at most public locations.

A Drinking Water Survey undertaken by Metro Vancouver revealed that those who drink bottled water are concerned for the environment and would use tap water for drinking if it were more readily available to them. The results of the same survey indicated that 32% of the people surveyed drink bottled water because of its convenience.

Encouraging people to use refillable bottles and the phasing out of single-use plastic water bottles will decrease the use of commercially bottled water, which often travels many miles from its bottling source to its point of sale. The manufacturing of the plastic bottles and the transportation of the bottled water results in the burning of large amount of fossil fuels and the release of carbon dioxide and other pollution into the atmosphere. In addition, millions of single-use plastic water bottles end up in Metro Vancouver's municipal waste stream.

Staff has reviewed the matter and is recommending that Council endorse an amended version of the Metro Vancouver Tap Water Declaration as described below:

The First Component of the Declaration reads: "The City of Surrey will seek to phase out the municipal use of bottled water, limit the availability of bottled water in municipal facilities, and will promote the use of municipal water."

For meetings at City Hall, City staff is increasingly using water in jugs instead of bottled water. The City's Sustainability Team is developing a Sustainability Meeting Policy that will include the elimination of the use of bottled water and will recommend alternatives. The City also encourages the use of tap water by ensuring that water fountains are installed at convenient locations at most City facilities.

It is noted that some of the City's customers at recreational facilities will only drink packaged beverages and expect the City to make available bottled water as an alternative to flavoured drinks in automatic dispensing machines. The City currently has a contract with a beverage supplier for automatic dispensing machines at City facilities that specifically allows the supplier to offer bottled water for sale. The contract terminates in March 2011. The provisions related to the sale of bottled water will be reviewed in advance of any new contract being awarded. At this time it is not considered practical to attempt to eliminate the sale of bottled water at City facilities.

The second component of the Declaration reads: The City of Surrey will, wherever possible and appropriate, encourage the installation of accessible drinking fountains in new and refurbished buildings as well as in new and refurbished parks and other public spaces.

The City, in a phased program, is installing additional drinking fountains in accessible locations in parks, municipal buildings and other public spaces where plumbing is available and vandalism is not an issue. An education plan is being developed to inform the public of the Tap Water Campaign and the benefits that can be achieved if the campaign is successful. In general these actions can be carried out with minimal financial impact to the City.

Sustainability Considerations

The Tap Water Campaign was initiated by Metro Vancouver to encourage people to drink tap water in refillable bottles instead of buying water in single-use plastic bottles. By endorsing the Tap Water Campaign, the City of Surrey will demonstrate its commitment to its Sustainability Charter and increase awareness of the Tap Water Campaign. Reduction in the purchase of water in single-use plastic bottles will reduce greenhouse gases and waste generation and will minimize packaging and resource consumption. These outcomes support the actions numbered EN₂ (Waste Reduction) and EN₅ (Green Procurement Policies and Practices) contained in the Surrey Sustainability Charter.

CONCLUSION

The City of Surrey municipal drinking water is of high quality, safe to drink and readily available at most public locations. The City has a program to install additional drinking fountains in refurbished and new facilities and in other public locations. This program has minimal financial impact to the City. Based on the discussion in this report, it is recommended that Council endorse the Metro Vancouver Tap Water Declaration with an amendment as noted in the Recommendation section of this report.

Vincent Lalonde, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering

KZ/VL/KL/jkb:kd/brb

Appendix I: Letter from Metro Vancouver, dated November 4, 2008

Appendix II: Proposed Tap Water Declaration (from Metro Vancouver)



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Office of the Chair
Tel: 604-450-4115 Fax: 604-450-4111

November 4, 2008

File No.: CR-16-01
PF-03-01

Mayor Dianne L. Watts and Council
City of Surrey
14245-56th Avenue
Surrey, BC V3X 3A2

Dear Mayor Watts and Council:

Further to the decision of the Metro Vancouver Board to endorse the *Tap Water Campaign Municipal Declaration* at its October 3, 2008 meeting, please find attached a copy of that declaration for consideration by your municipality.

The intent of the declaration is to remind residents of the pristine sources and high quality of our municipal tap water. Committing to using tap water at municipal meetings and functions will model the sustainable behaviour – drinking tap water in refillable containers – we hope our citizens will adopt. Encouraging the installation of accessible drinking fountains in our buildings and parks where possible and appropriate makes this behaviour more likely to occur.

We truly are blessed with some of the best drinking water in the world straight from the tap. The opening of the new Seymour Caplano Filtration Plant next year and completing construction of new ultra violet light treatment at our Coquitlam watershed in 2010 will further improve the quality of our municipal drinking water.

Metro Vancouver encourages the City of Surrey to adopt this declaration so that the region can speak as one in its desire to have residents use nature's health drink – always on tap.

Yours truly,

Lois E. Jackson
Chair, Metro Vancouver Board
LEJ@MTRV.ca

cc: City Managers

Attachment: Tap Water Declaration

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TAP WATER DECLARATION

WHEREAS, Metro Vancouver's municipal water systems are among the finest in the world; and

WHEREAS, high quality, safe drinking water is already available at most public locations; and

WHEREAS, Metro Vancouver's tap water is strictly regulated by British Columbia's *Drinking Water Protection Act* and is tested over 25,000 times per year and bottled water is regulated by the *Food and Drug Act*; and

WHEREAS, Metro Vancouver will open a new state-of-the-art water filtration plant early in 2009 to further improve the high quality of the region's tap water; and

WHEREAS, bottled water often costs more than an equivalent volume of gasoline, equivalent to 2,000 times more than tap water; and

WHEREAS, up to 40 per cent of bottled water on the market comes from municipal water systems; and

WHEREAS, bottled water often travels many miles from the source, resulting in the burning of large amounts of fossil fuels, releasing CO₂ and other pollution into the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, millions of single-use plastic water bottles end up in Metro Vancouver's municipal waste; and

WHEREAS, municipalities are responsible for delivering safe and affordable water to our citizens; and

WHEREAS, decreasing and eventually eliminating bottled water from government use demonstrates the emphasis municipalities place on the quality of their tap water and decreases the impact of bottled water on municipal waste; and

WHEREAS, Metro Vancouver and member municipalities recognize the importance of bottled water in times of emergency and times when municipal water is unavailable.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that (Municipality) will:

- a) seek to phase out municipal use of bottled water and the availability of bottled water in municipal facilities, and will promote the importance of municipal water; and
- b) will, wherever possible and appropriate, encourage the installation of accessible drinking fountains in new and refurbished buildings as well as new and refurbished park and other public spaces.