

September 2, 2008

METRO VANCOUVER LAUNCHES TAP WATER CAMPAIGN

Metro Vancouver launched its Tap Water Campaign today, inviting the region's residents to make a "tap water pledge" to drink tap water in refillable bottles instead of buying single-use plastic water bottles.

In June, as part of its Sustainability Framework, Metro Vancouver's Board of Directors set a goal: *Increase the use of tap water for drinking purposes by reducing sales of bottled water by 20 per cent by 2010.*

"Our tap water is the clearest and purest water you can possibly drink," said Metro Vancouver Water Committee Chair Tim Stevenson.

"It's always on tap, delivered right into your home. Why should taxpayers spend more of their money by buying bottled water in stores?"

Stevenson, a Metro Vancouver Director and City of Vancouver Councillor, was one of the officials who went to the UBC campus today to urge students, faculty and other residents of the region to make tap water their first choice.

Dr. Patricia Daly, the Chief Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, says people in Metro Vancouver should drink tap water.

"Most of the world does not have access to clean drinking water, but we have a pristine source of water here," the region's top public health official said. "It's all I drink. I don't drink bottled water."

UBC also supported Metro Vancouver's campaign to encourage more residents to drink tap water.

"As Canada's university sustainability leader, UBC encourages our community to make wise personal decisions about water use," said Stephen Owen, UBC Vice President, External, Legal and Community Relations.

With millions of single-use plastic water bottles ending up in landfills every year, getting more people to drink tap water also supports Metro Vancouver's Zero Waste Challenge. Launched in 2006, the Zero Waste Challenge also has a goal: *Divert 70 per cent of our solid waste from landfills by 2015.* Currently, almost half of the region's waste is now buried in landfills or incinerated in the region's waste-to-energy facility in Burnaby. Fifty-two per cent of our solid waste is recycled or diverted.

Last year, an estimated three million plastic water bottles ended up in the garbage. Those bottles could have been returned to recycling depots.

"The best way to reduce garbage is to not have garbage in the first place," said Metro Vancouver Director Marvin Hunt, a City of Surrey Councillor who chairs the region's Waste Management Committee.

“If we can avoid the use of plastic bottles by simply having a container we’re using over and over again, we’re conserving the resources that would have been used to make those bottles.”

Metro Vancouver’s tap water is rain water collected in three protected and restricted-access mountain watersheds – vast mountain valleys that feed snow melt and rain water into the Capilano, Seymour and Coquitlam reservoirs. That water is treated with chlorine at Capilano and Seymour, and with ozone at the Coquitlam reservoir. When the new Seymour-Capilano Water Filtration Plant opens in early 2009, the drinking water consumed by most of the region’s residents will become even better.

The \$600 million Seymour-Capilano project, which will purify water from both the Seymour and Capilano reservoirs, includes the largest water treatment plant in North America that uses ultraviolet light to disinfect water and eliminate potential pathogens or disease-carrying bacteria.

A new \$110 million ultraviolet disinfection facility will also be built to purify water at the Coquitlam reservoir. Construction work on that facility will begin next year.

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Nature’s health drink – always on tap

Metro Vancouver tests the water more than 25,000 times a year to ensure the highest quality drinking water is distributed through municipal water mains.

Tap water costs taxpayers about \$0.0008 per litre, or just 80 cents per 1,000 litres.

In this region, the retail sales price of a one-litre bottle of water may be \$2 or \$3, depending on the brand and point of purchase.

Source: Metro Vancouver



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