

November 2, 2020

Every few weeks our Coordinator Paul Baines collects and shares a list of current news and invites that inform and animate our Blue Community pledge to protect water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift.

In this update you can learn more about the Waterdocs Film Festival, a new effort to transfer Nestlé's water operations to Indigenous and settler communities, new rules and old myths about plastics and recycling, and COVID and the human right to water.

WATERDOCS FILM FESTIVAL

From November 4 – 8, this annual water documentary festival is now available to everyone. Normally it is an in-person event only in Toronto, but because of COVID anyone can access these great documentaries. The CSJ Blue Community project is a sponsor and has VIP access. [You can see the full program here.](#)

ASK NESTLÉ TO DIVEST ITS ASSETS

The collective efforts to phase out the bottled water industry in Ontario is getting bolder. We successfully won yet another 6 month extension to the 4 year ban on new bottled water permits. We helped influence a new permit policy framework that is still in development but it already signals that communities will be able to veto new bottled water wells.

Now there is a North American campaign asking Nestlé to give back some of its assets to the local communities who are struggling with current and future water security. A few months ago Nestlé was trying to sell its Canadian water operations to Ice River Springs. That sale was denied by the regulators and now water justice activists are asking "if you want to divest from Canada, give communities back their water commons".

[You can read about and sign onto the North American campaign here](#) and the Wellington Water Watchers have already signalled that the Aberfoyle Nestlé bottling plant and well should be given to Six Nations of the Grand River with the Hillsborough well going to Centre Wellington County and the Middlebrook well going to Elora. Much more work is being done on this campaign, since these are BIG shifts in the struggle for water justice. As the campaign develops your CSJ Blue Community project will keep you up to date.

THE MYTH, THE BIN, AND THE NEW RULES: PLASTICS

Plastics are again in the news with the Federal government announcing its plans to ban various kinds of 'single use' plastic. The initial promises seem very progressive.

Announcing plans to reach zero plastic waste by 2030, the federal government's website noted that "every year, Canadians throw away 3 million tonnes of plastic waste, only 9% of which is recycled, meaning the vast majority of plastics end up in landfills." ([from the CBC](#))

But guess what didn't make the list?

Items included in the ban ([source](#)):

- Checkout bags
- Stir sticks
- Beverage six-pack rings
- Cutlery
- Straws
- Food packaging made from plastics that are difficult to recycle

Items not included in the ban:

- Garbage bags
- Milk bags
- Snack food wrappers
- Disposable personal care items and their packaging
- **Beverage containers and lids**
- Contact lenses and packaging
- Cigarette filters
- Items used in medical facilities
- Personal protective equipment

Canadians spend 2.5 billion dollars every year on bottled water. Almost all of this comes in single use plastic bottles. That's a lot of bottles with only about 20% of these bottles downcycled.

There is no such thing as plastic recycling. This myth was created by the plastics and fossil fuel industries 30 years ago because society was starting to question the rise of plastics and their negative impacts. Downcycling is the process of recycling a material 1, 2, or 3 times with each phase degrading the material so that it can only be landfilled.

[Read and listen to this CBC interview](#) with an investigative journalist about the industrial myth of plastic recycling and how we are still struggling with this pervasive and persuasive substance.

If you like, [add your name and voice to this petition](#) to include single use plastic water bottles in the Canada plastics ban.

COVID AND THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Water Network moderated a conversation on the human right to water in times of COVID-19 with Bishop Arnold Temple (chairperson of the WCC-EWN) and Dr. Maude Barlow (co-founder of the Blue Planet Project). [You can listen to the 27 minute recording here.](#)

On a related note, our Blue Community project has started collaborating with WaterAid Canada about the human right to water and sanitation. [You can read one of their bulletins here.](#) From that same source they write:

As COVID-19 has devastating impacts on people's health, education and livelihoods across the globe, hand washing has been recognized as a first line of defense in public health. At WaterAid, our experience of promoting hand washing with soap and water as part of our WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and behavior change programs has enabled us to respond quickly to COVID-19, scaling up our existing hygiene work through government-led mechanisms, focusing mainly on hygiene behavior change.

Some statistics:

- 40% of people worldwide don't have access to soap and water to wash their hands.
- Three billion people worldwide have nowhere to wash their hands with soap and clean water at home.
- 1 in 4 health centers lack these basic hand washing facilities on site.
- 2 in 5 schools globally do not have soap and water available to students – that's 800 million children who lack soap and water at their school.