

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq,
Minister, Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

August 19, 2009

Re. alPHa Resolution A09-7, Regulation of the Bottled Water Industry

On behalf of member Medical Officers of Health, Boards of Health and Affiliate organizations of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) I am writing to introduce alPHa's Resolution on Regulation of the Bottled Water Industry, passed at our 2009 Annual General Meeting.

As described in the attached resolution, Canada's bottled water industry is not subject to the types of oversight that Canadians expect of their government to ensure that the products that they consume are safe.

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada estimate that every year between 11 and 13 million Canadians suffer from illnesses related to the consumption of contaminated food. Because of this, regulation exists at all stages of the "farm to fork" continuum to provide as much protection as possible from food-borne illness.

Similarly, public drinking water supplies are subject to strong regulation, which reflects the critical importance of clean drinking water. The outbreak of e. coli gastroenteritis in Walkerton Ontario in 2000 resulted in seven deaths and at least 2500 illnesses, a clear demonstration of the severe impact of lacklustre oversight of drinking water, at both the operational and regulatory levels.

It follows therefore that with an estimated one-third of Canadians using bottled water as their primary source of drinking water, that these products should be equally regulated. The extraction, processing, packaging, distribution and storage of bottled water certainly exposes it to opportunities for contamination that can pose health risks to Canadians – including bacteria, chemicals, moulds and glass chips, all of which have been cited in bottled water recalls by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The attached resolution is self-explanatory and urges action based on our members' concerns about Canadians' misconceptions about the safety of bottled water, its significant negative environmental consequences and the unfettered commercial exploitation of a finite resource that no person can live without.

We look forward to hearing your plans for a strong regulatory regime for monitoring bottled water products and ensuring that they meet the minimum standards of the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water. We also look forward to a strengthened federal commitment to funding and promoting public confidence in public drinking water infrastructure.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Linda Stewart,
Executive Director

Copy: Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Hon. Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food (Canada)
Hon. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance (Canada)
Hon. Jim Prentice, Minister of the Environment (Canada)
Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada
Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health (Ontario)
Dr. Cordell Neudorf, Chair, Canadian Public Health Association

Encl.

aIPHa RESOLUTION A09-7

TITLE: Regulation of the Bottled Water Industry

SPONSOR: Durham Region Health Department

WHEREAS The bottled water industry has grown to a multi-million dollar industry in Canada; and

WHEREAS Bottled water is estimated to be between 240-10,000 times more expensive than tap water; and

WHEREAS Independent scientific studies have found toxic contaminants in bottled water products; and

WHEREAS The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has issued ~30 separate recalls of ~50 bottled water products since 2000; and

WHEREAS Environmental impacts encompass the production, transportation and disposal of bottled water; and

WHEREAS The bottled water industry is largely unregulated in Canada, being monitored on a voluntary basis, overseen by industry; and

WHEREAS Bottled water is not required to meet the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*; and

WHEREAS Bottled water lacks information on the source of the water, the contents of the bottled water, and the storage and expiry dates; and

WHEREAS The bottled water industry extracts millions of litres of water per day at very little cost;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT aIPHa urges the Government of Canada to enact a comprehensive regulatory regime for the bottled water industry administered and enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada that includes:

- a) Bottled water conforming, at a minimum, to the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*,
- b) Comprehensive bottled water labelling, including the water source, quantity and contents of any added ingredients, packaging date, expiry, treatment processes, the instruction “refrigerate after opening”, and manufacturers contact information,
- c) Public reporting of water quality tests performed by manufacturers from government-approved laboratories testing for bacteriological, chemical and radiological contaminants on a specified regular basis, and
- d) Regular reviewing and updating of bottled water labelling and testing requirements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT aIPHa urges the Government of Canada to continue to significantly reinvest in public drinking water infrastructure through federal transfers to the provinces, territories and municipalities, possibly including from revenues derived from a special

surtax levied on the profits of the bottled water industry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Prime Minister of Canada, Ministers of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, Finance and the Environment, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, CPHA are so advised.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE:

Moved: K. Gorman (Durham)

Seconded: P. Sutcliffe (Sudbury)

Resolution CARRIED