



## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **COMMERCIALY BOTTLED WATER**

#### **Rationale**

“In his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis states that “Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resources, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet *access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.*” - *Pope Francis*

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board supports the notion that access to potable water is a universal human right. This right is being increasingly threatened by a number of practices. The increasing commercialization of water has manifested itself in a number of ways; from the privatization of municipal water supplies to the marketing of water in single-use, soft plastic bottles. “Very often, large corporations purchase the rights to local water sources and extract immense amounts of it for sale in bottles. The privatization of water resources violates the right to water of those who lose access to these resources.” (Statement on the Right to Safe Drinking Water, Canadian Conference of Canadian Bishops (CCCCB), 2018). Environmentally, the disposal of empty, plastic water bottles has created new burdens not only ecologically, but financially. As such, it will be the policy of the Board to reduce, and, where possible, eliminate the use of water in commercially produced single-use, plastic bottles and to promote viable alternatives for all Board sites and school communities, including events hosted by students and Catholic School Councils.

The world is already experiencing the effects of a worsening global water crisis. Growing numbers of the world’s people are living in areas where fresh water is a scarce resource. Canada holds 20% of the world’s supply of fresh water and so has a special role to play as steward of this critical resource. Our students must be able to contribute in informed and meaningful ways to this public policy conversation. Such consciousness raising is appropriately reinforced by modeling good stewardship practices.

- Pricing – what kind of price mark-ups do we find in the bottled water market?
- Water Sources – when the label on the bottle says ‘pure spring water’, where does the water really come from, who owns it, and how is it regulated?
- Transforming Water – what kinds of filtering and processing methods do companies use to turn ‘real’ water into bottled water? What is the difference between bottled water and tap water?
- Contaminating Water – what evidence is there to support the industry’s claim that bottled water is

superior to tap water?

- Marketing Schemes – what kinds of marketing and advertising schemes are used by companies to sell what is really ‘water transformed into water’?
- Consumer practices – why are people turning from tap water to bottled water?
- Eco-threatening – what environmental damage is caused by the escalating use and disposal of plastic bottles?
- Recycling Record – what is the track record of companies when it comes to recycling? Recycling rates for plastic bottles has been in steady decline since 1995, despite the explosion in plastic-bottle use.
- School Contracting and Fundraising – what marketing devices have the bottled water companies used in cash-strapped schools, colleges, and universities?
- Water Privatizing – what role and impact does the bottled water industry have on the privatization of public water utilities?

### **Guiding Principles**

- All people have a right to safe, reliable sources of potable water.
- The Board’s EcoSchools initiative embraces the environmental concerns surrounding the disposal of single-use, soft plastic bottles.
- The Board acknowledges its responsibility to model stewardship practices for our students and their families consistent with the Board Mission Statement and Catholic Social Teachings.

### **References**

*Statement on the Right to Safe Drinking Water, Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, CCCB, 2018*

*Laudato Si: Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, Vatican, 2015*

*Declaration of the United Nations - International Decade for Action Water for Life 2005–2015*  
(<http://www.worldwaterday.org/>)

*Our Relationship with the Environment: The Need for Conversion, Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008*

*A Common Good ... an Inalienable Right, Papal Message for World Water Day 2007*

*2002 -2005 Fall Action Campaigns of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace Water – Not For Profit and, Carrying into the Share Lent Campaigns, Thirsting for Justice*  
(<http://www.devp.org/>)

*You Love All That Exists ... All Things Are Yours, God, Lover of Life - A Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative, Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003*

EcoSchools (<http://schools.alcdebc.on.ca/ecoschools/default.aspx>)

Kairos (<http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/index.asp>)

### **Administrative Procedures**

Commercially Bottled Water

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