

Bottled water debate all wet: Councillor

Canadians have bigger problems to worry about

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While Canada's mayors support squeezing out bottled water use in municipal facilities, worrying about plastic water bottles during this economic crisis is frivolous, a Toronto councillor says.

In a vote at its meeting in Victoria on Saturday, the national board of directors for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities passed a resolution encouraging the phasing out of the sale and purchase of bottled water where potable water is available.

"Definitely it hurts the industry, but it takes away the choice from the public," said Councillor Doug Holyday, who represents Etobicoke Centre (Ward 3).

'Pop's not banned'

Mayors argue that up to 80% of water bottles end up in landfills.

"If that's the case with plastic water bottles, I'm sure it's the case with plastic pop bottles," Holyday said. "Pop's not banned. Not yet."

"And I think there's far bigger things that could be dealt with than this matter," he said. "With the economy the way it is you think they might spend their time ... trying to do something to improve the economy or to deal with the problem of the economy — as opposed to this."

The drive to reduce the flow of plastic bottles to landfill sites and increased use of municipal water supplies would spark investments into

infrastructure, argued FCM president Jean Perrault, who is also mayor of Sherbrooke, Que.

"Some parts of the country, like Labrador," have been living with boil-water advisories, he said.

"Our demand (is) for the federal government to invest in infrastructure," Perrault said.

Drink from tap

"The first infrastructure need in this country is to offer potable water to everyone."

He said people living in communities that have a reliable water supply should drink from the tap — not plastic bottles.

While the resolution, introduced by the cities of Toronto and London, stops short of calling for a ban, Perrault said there should be less reliance on bottles that often end up in landfills.

"The object (is) to influence all of our municipalities to use their potable water, which is good," he said.

"We're not talking about banning, we're talking about education. It's a way to show that, why buy bottles when your tap water is in reality, really good

shape."

The resolution said municipalities should develop awareness campaigns about the benefits and quality of municipal water supplies.



While some municipalities are pushing to have bottled water banned from their offices, Canadians are more concerned about the economy, says Councillor Doug Holyday.