

History
of the
Wellington

Water

Watchers



Part 1

Launching a Local Movement

Robert Case & Leah Connor



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the Wellington Water Watchers founders and volunteers who contributed memories and memorabilia, but especially to Mark Goldberg whose archives have been indispensable.

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wellington *Water* watchers.ca



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Top: 2007 permit correspondence • Middle: *Guelph Mercury*, May 5, 2007
Bottom: Nestlé full page ad in the *Guelph Tribune*, May 1, 2007

May 8, 2007

West Central Region
Permit to Take Water Evaluator
Ministry of the Environment
West Central Regional Office
Floor 12, 119 King Street West
Hamilton Ontario
L8P 4Y7

Fax: (905) 521-7620

Re: EBR Registry Number: 010-0224
Ministry: Environment (Reference Number: 0275-6ZSQSL)
Type of Posting: Instrument
Date Proposal Loaded: April 2, 2007
Status of Posting: Proposal
Comment Period: April 2, 2007 to May 11, 2007

Nestlé Canada Inc, Renewal of Permit to Take Water - Ontario Water Resources Act, section 34

Dear Sir or Madam:

Wellington Water Watchers is citizens committee that was formed during the past several weeks in response to growing concerns about the impact of water taking permits, such as the proposed instrument renewal for Nestlé's Aberfoyle facility (noted above), on the source waters for the City of Guelph and County of Wellington.

Wellington Water Watchers has initiated, at the urging of many local citizens, an action oriented campaign to bring awareness to the general public, the local municipalities and the Province of Ontario, of the ecological effects and impacts of ongoing water takings within the region and the threat posed to future public water supplies. We are aware that many residents of Ontario have responded by sending comments and concerns in support of the above noted proposed instrument. This amount of public interest, in

WAR OVER OUR WATER

A who's who in this city's latest, brand new and ballooning grassroots fight — this time against Nestlé's bottling operation in Aberfoyle

By SCOTT TRACY
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Six weeks ago, Wellington Water Watchers did not exist. Now, the Guelph-based grassroots organization boasts more than 200 paid members. Its website has been viewed more than 5,000 times and has spawned a knock-off site, apparently registered to a corporation based in Mumbai, India, and seemingly designed to steer others away from the actual Water Watchers site.



In the last two weeks the group has brought federal Green party Leader Elizabeth May and Council of Canadians chair Maude Barlow to the Royal City. At a recent civic strategic planning session, the Wellington Water Watchers' name was being thrown about like you'd have to be living under a rock to not know who they are or what they're about.

So who are they and what are they about?

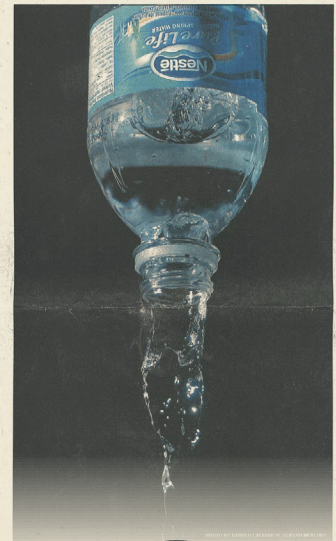
The group is an offshoot of and largely shares a membership with — the Guelph Civic League, a citizen activist group formed after the 2003 municipal election.

The Water Watchers' "mission," according to its website — the legitimate one, not the Mumbai version — is "the protection, restoration and conservation of drinking water in Guelph and Wellington County."

It's a pretty easy idea to get behind, but the momentum with which the group has taken off has astonished even James Gordon, a two-decade veteran of local activists and co-ordinator of Water Watchers.

"The act of the king has not been around here, but I've never seen an issue that struck a chord the way this one has," Gordon said in an interview in his *Guelph Mercury* column.

SEE WATCHERS, PAGE A8



BY THE NUMBERS

Some fact about Nestlé's operations

3.6 million — number of litres of water Nestlé Waters Canada is permitted to remove from the ground in Aberfoyle every day

15 — number of months it would take to fill the Rogers Centre at that rate

24 — number of breast-feeding infants it would take for a Doogie 747 to burn that volume in fuel

5.7 million — number of plastic bottles the Nestlé plant is capable of producing every day

47 — per cent of water drawn from Nestlé's Aberfoyle plant that's sold in Ontario

30 — percentage of plastic bottles recycled annually in Ontario

5 — number of years for which Nestlé wants its water-taking permit extended

2,000 — cost, in dollars, to apply for a water-taking permit

0 — cost, in dollars, for permit holders to take water from the ground

20 billion — amount, in litres, of water sold globally every year by the water-bottling industry

1,200 — number of letters of opposition received by the Ministry of the Environment as of last Monday

10,000 — number of letters Mark Goldberg of Wellington Water Watchers hopes the ministry will receive by next Friday's deadline

300 — number of staff at Nestlé's Aberfoyle plant

— Mercury staff

Nestlé Waters Canada Aberfoyle Permit Renewal Application

To our neighbours and the community:

As many of you know, Nestlé Waters Canada is applying to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to renew our "Permit to take Water" from Aberfoyle Springs to supply our Aberfoyle bottling facility. This is a renewal of our existing Permit to take Water, which was issued in 2005. We have requested that the Permit be renewed for a five-year period at the same water volume as granted in our current Permit.

Questions have been raised by some citizens regarding this application. Some of the questions are related to local groundwater issues, while others involve the bottled water industry as a whole.

We understand that water issues are a key priority for area residents and municipalities. As an active member of this community, we want to assure you that we are listening and we acknowledge the need to share information and respond to your concerns.

As a first step, Nestlé has retained Gartner Lee Limited, a well-respected, locally-based firm that specializes in environmental science and water management. Gartner Lee will facilitate constructive community dialogue for questions related to our Permit application and our work in locating a back-up, secondary groundwater source. This secondary source will provide us with two possible extraction points that we will operate under the same total water permit limit.

Nestlé Waters Canada is committed to environmental excellence, sustainable water use and minimizing waste. Our comprehensive water monitoring program in Aberfoyle already exceeds the regulatory requirements set out in our Permit. Over the course of the two-year monitoring period, since the issuance of our current Permit, the results have indicated no adverse effects on local water supplies, on nearby wetlands or on water courses.

We have also made great strides in other areas by reducing our total raw material usage over the last five years by 30%. This year we are introducing a new bottle, "Eco-Shape", which reduces the plastic in our bottles by 15%. With this new bottle, we are proud to offer Canadians a bottled beverage that not only promotes their health, but one that has the lowest plastic packaging impact on our environment.

As part of the Nestlé Waters North America group of companies, Nestlé Waters Canada operates under a Good Neighbour Policy which governs all aspects of our environmental performance. You can learn more about this policy by visiting www.nestle-watersna.com and following the "Community Involvement" links.

We welcome your interest and involvement in our permit renewal application, and I invite you to send comments, questions or concerns to my direct attention at comments_for_the_president@waters.nestle.com. I will personally respond to all of your messages.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Gail Cosman
President
Nestlé Waters Canada



Introduction

IN 2000, NESTLÉ bought Aberfoyle Springs with a water bottling plant and two wells in Wellington County, Ontario.¹ In late 2006, anticipating an application for the renewal of Nestlé's Provincial [permit to take water](#), a group of Guelph and area residents launched a campaign opposing water bottling. By the spring of 2007, the Wellington Water Watchers was born. By mid-summer, the city of Guelph was abuzz with discussion, [media headlines](#), and action related to the controversial corporate water-mining operation just south of the city.

In May 2007, at the end of the 30-day public comment period associated with Nestlé's permit renewal application, WWW's campaign had generated more than [8,000 comments](#) from citizens opposing the permit application. Overwhelmed with the response, the permit process stalled and it was not until a year later (April 18, 2008) that the provincial Ministry of the Environment awarded Nestlé its permit renewal.

The decision was not what the water activists had been hoping for, but the public action surrounding the application process did affect the application review and decision-making process and won some significant concessions, including the limiting of the permit to a two-year term, rather than the five years Nestlé applied for, and the introduction of more stringent (but nonetheless limited) monitoring requirements.² More significantly, the success of the campaign raised

1 With the same purchase, Nestlé Waters Canada also procured a well and bottling plant in Hope, BC. This story, however, focuses on the community response to Nestlé's water-taking and bottling activities in Wellington County, ON.

2 "Numerous requests for a two-year term" rather than the five-year term requested, in conjunction with the identification by activist groups of specific indications of negative hydrogeological impacts of Nestlé's water-taking on nearby Mill Creek led the Ontario Ministry of the Environment to limit the term of Nestlé's permit to two years and to include "additional and more comprehensive monitoring conditions" on the permit, "such as increasing the frequency of measurement and the number of gradient monitoring locations as well as habitat and ecological studies" (Ontario Ministry of the Environment, 2008).

the profile of water issues in the area, consolidated a growing concern into collective action, and established the Wellington Water Watchers as a leading voice for water protection in Wellington County and beyond. Over a decade later, WWW and its growing network of partners, allies, and supporters has earned international attention for its organizing and advocacy on water issues, and has become an increasingly influential political force.

What follows is the story of the founding of the organization, derived from semi-structured interviews with the founding members of the organization and a review of available archival materials.³ While the organization has been in existence for more than 12 years and shows no signs of abating, at the time of writing (summer 2019), the story below can be considered a first chapter in the history of the Wellington Water Watchers, with its focus limited to the early years of the organization and its campaigns—beginning in late 2006 and ending with the launch of a new phase of programming with an educational program known as the Message in the Bottle in 2009.

Our hope is that the project of documenting WWW's history will continue with contributions of new insights, additional archival materials, and new chapters in the coming months and years.⁴

3 Interviews were conducted by Leah Connor (research assistant) as part of an academic research project of [Robert Case](#), Renison University College, Waterloo. This project received ethics approval from the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB# 31267)

4 Questions, additions, or corrections related to this publication, and/or contributions of archival materials, subsequent chapters, or other ideas for extending this social history of Wellington Water Watchers should be directed to Robert Case, rob.case@uwaterloo.ca.

Give the Message in the bottle

Hundreds of dollars are spent by families on bottled water and juice boxes every year. Many families are struggling just to make ends meet – and our earth is struggling under the burden of this production and waste. You can help by considering our donation options for your gift-giving this year!

1 Join us!
Become a Water Watcher member for \$10 (renewable annually) or renew your membership if you haven't already this year.

2 Sponsor a Class
\$5 water bottle for each child x 25 kids = \$125 donation
Sponsor a Class in the name of a loved one! Your local school will be grateful for the reduced waste and increased awareness. Gift certificates available. Donations are 100% tax deductible.

3 Special Seasonal Promotion
Donate only \$10 and choose from any of the below stainless steel refillable containers.

How to order
online wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca
in person
• 10 Carden St., Mondays/Wednesdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
• Guelph Farmers market, Saturdays 7:00 am – noon

All proceeds go towards our Message in the Bottle Program, helping to ensure that every child in Guelph and Wellington County can participate and learn about water issues, regardless of income.

A joint project of
wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca
and **Eden Mills Millpond Conservation Association**

Donate to our Resource Library
We are in the midst of constructing a resource library available to loan out to our members. Every relevant book, film or document relating to water or water issues would be welcome. Donate a book or film that is gathering dust on your shelves, or purchase a relevant film or book and donate it to us on behalf of someone on your gift list!

800 ml (27 oz) bottle
532 ml (18 oz) bottle
355 ml (12 oz) bottle with sippy cup lid
473 ml (16 oz) 16 oz Hammer Tumbler

All are food-grade stainless steel with virgin polypropylene #5 plastic lids (totally non-leaching and safe). Available while quantities last.

Christmas 2009 fundraising flyer to raise money for the Wellington Water Watcher's Message in the Bottle program.



Nestlé's Aberfoyle bottling plant.

Somebody Had to Do Something

IT WAS LATE at night, sometime in November 2006, and Mark Goldberg was on his way home to Guelph from the Toronto Pearson Airport after a business trip. He exited Highway 401 at Brock Road and headed north, and as he slowed his vehicle down as he approached the town of Aberfoyle, in Puslinch Township, Mark noticed something he had not paid attention to before. Pulling out of a driveway, in front of a sign reading “Nestlé Waters Canada Bottling Plant and Head Office,” were two unmarked tractor trailers turning south and heading towards the 401.

Mark had seen the Nestlé sign before, but he had not really thought about it. Seeing the trucks that late in the year and that late at night, however, gave him pause:

I saw these two trucks turning out that way it made me think, I wonder why are they shipping in November? I know that people drink a lot of bottled

water in the summer time, this was the winter time. And I started to think they must have people there loading these trucks — they're probably on the night shift — and I wonder how many people work on the day shift loading trucks. I wonder how many trucks pull out of there, how much water they're shipping, where it's going... I hadn't given it a lot of thought before then.

The next day, Mark, a toxicologist and environmental consultant who knew how to research water-taking permits, started searching for information and found Nestlé's permits to take water on Ontario's Environmental Registry. He discovered that a permit, which was up for renewal the following spring, would approve Nestlé Waters to take 3.6 million litres each day for the next 10 years from the aquifer beneath its bottling plant in Aberfoyle. In his investigations, Mark also found that Nestlé brand water from Aberfoyle could be bought anywhere from St. John's, NL, to Victoria, BC. He asked friends each of in these locations to purchase bottled water, photograph the label showing it originated in Aberfoyle, and then swear an affidavit before a notary public that they had purchased the bottle in their city. Others reported seeing Aberfoyle water in Florida.

"Is this right?" he thought to himself. "It is leaving our watershed. That's an awful lot of water."

So he started talking to others about it and thinking about pulling together a group of people to investigate further. One of those people was James Gordon. Mark knew James as a musician and local activist. "He had been very active in trying to stop Walmart from coming into Guelph," Mark explained. "So I went to James and I explained to him what I found and I said 'will you help me make people aware of this and maybe try to stop this?' And he said 'Oh yeah, that's great.' James is very good in front of a microphone, so I said 'You play lead guitar, and I'll play rhythm and back you up with the facts and figures and see what we can do.'"

"I remember the day he [Mark Goldberg] just arrived at my front door," James Gordon confirms:

He knew I was not a scientist but that I had spent a long time advocating for environmental/water issues, social justice issues. He wouldn't take no for an answer. He'd already done the homework, and he got me to sign something saying "we're starting a non-profit organization." And it just started that day, and we built up a board of directors. I think we were both incredibly surprised and amazed with the immediate public response.



Mark Goldberg



James Gordon

"James is very good in front of a microphone, so I said 'You play lead guitar, and I'll play rhythm and back you up with the facts and figures and see what we can do.'" — Mark Goldberg

Not long thereafter, at some point early in 2007, James and Mark pulled together a small but mighty group of people around a kitchen table at someone's house in downtown Guelph, and the Wellington Water Watchers was born. As Mark Goldberg remembers it:

We decided we would try to start an organization that would make people aware of [the Nestlé issue]. We didn't know what to call it at the time. We did some web searches. So we called ourselves the "Wellington Water Watchers" and paid for the website, Wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca. So, a couple of things came out of that meeting that were precedent setting. Kind of the foundations of the organization.

"It didn't take too long before it wasn't just two lonely guys," recalls James Gordon. "It was a viable organization pretty quickly."

Specifics of the timelines have since faded from memory, but by all accounts, events unfolded rapidly as the group launched a campaign beginning in the late spring of 2007 that would shape environmental politics in Guelph and area for the next decade and beyond.

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DAVE CARTER, GUELPH MERCURY

Mark Goldberg, left, and James Gordon, co-founders of the Wellington Water Watchers, speak during a news conference yesterday at Goldie Mill in Guelph.

Nestlé disappointed

► WATER FROM PAGE A1

"We know that the ministry is listening to our citizens and is going to be better stewards of our watershed," Gordon said.

Guelph MPP Liz Sandals praised the permit-renewal process.

"I think what we are seeing is that the new process is doing

water source was protected and sustainable. The group attracted thousands of supporters, who made 6,000 submissions to the permit renewal process.

Wellington Water Watchers remains concerned that a private water bottler is allowed to take such vast quantities of water.

The group will continue to dis-

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Guelph Mercury, April 2008

Kitchen-table Organizing: Building a Foundation

BY MARCH OF 2007, the newly formed Wellington Water Watchers had ramped up its activities, recruiting new members, making presentations at various events and community organization, organizing community meetings, outreach events and fundraisers, conducting legal research, advocating at the Ministry of the Environment, etc. The excerpt of just one volunteer's calendar on page 10 is an indication of the level of activity by WWW in 2007.

While on the surface of the narratives shared by WWW's founders, the formation of WWW seems organic and effortless, a closer look reveals considerably more complex and strategic organizational efforts.

For one thing, it was no accident that Mark turned to James Gordon for assistance. James was not only a friend, but also someone connected to others involved in social justice and environmental advocacy in the Guelph area. Mark's recognition of the opportunity to combine

Excerpt from a WWW Volunteer's Schedule, 2007

Mar. 1, 12:00 p.m.	Mark Goldberg and Lorenz Calcagno have lunch meeting	May 12, 8:00 p.m.	Stephen Fearing house concert [at Meg & Lorenz's]; Nestlé Waters Canada CEO invited and attends; Stephen takes a jab
Mar. 3, 8:00 a.m.	Mark G. breakfast meeting with prospective members @ Eggcetera, Guelph	May 14, 11:00 a.m.	WWW meet with Theresa McClenaghan at Ministry of Environment, Toronto
Mar. 21, 1:00 p.m.	WWW planning meeting	May 18, 7:00 p.m.	WWW planning meeting
Apr. 4, 7:00 p.m.	WWW planning meeting	May 28, 11:00 a.m.	Lorenz and environmental lawyer Anna Lintner meet at 5 Queen
Apr. 10, 7:00 p.m.	WWW at Public Meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph	May 31, 12:00 p.m.	WWW presentation to CELP [Grade 10] students
Apr. 25, 6:00 p.m.	WWW pre-Nestlé meeting at James Gordon's	June 26, 6:00 p.m.	WWW meeting at Mark Goldberg's
Apr. 25, 7:00 p.m.	WWW meeting with local environmental consultant and Nestlé Waters Canada CEO	June 26, 5:30 p.m.	WWW meeting at Wolfond Park, Guelph
Apr. 27, 11:00 a.m.	2000 permit opposition postcards delivered to [Guelph-Wellington Coalition for Social Justice contact]	July 20, 2:00 p.m.	WWW meet with Theresa McClenaghan at Ministry of Environment, Toronto
May 2, 7:00 p.m.	Maude Barlow presented by WWW at Knox Presbyterian Church, Guelph	Sep. 5, 6:00 p.m.	WWW meeting in a member's home
May 7, 7:00 p.m.	Lorenz makes presentation to Guelph City Council on behalf of WWW	Sep. 12, 7:00 p.m.	WWW Public Meeting at Norfolk United Church, Guelph. Selling memberships and Kleen Kanteens
		Sep. 27, 7:00 p.m.	Mike Nagy speaking on water issues at Green Party Office

his scientific knowledge to “playing rhythm guitar” to back James’ proficiency in front of an audience was as strategic as it may have been convenient. When they convened a group for a kitchen table meeting in downtown Guelph, similarly, they didn’t invite just anyone. The host of the meeting, for instance, was a friend of Mark’s, but besides that was known in the community for his experience in organizing political campaigns and for his role as the site coordinator for Guelph’s Hillside Music Festival. With his related social capital and logistical skills, he had more to contribute than just passion.

Others at the table included a Tony Leighton, a successful magazine writer and editor, and Gareth Lind, a politically active graphic designer, both of whom would prove to be instrumental in getting information out to the public in those early days.¹ Also present were Arlene Slocombe, who would go on to be WWW’s executive director for most of the next decade, and Mike Nagy, a seasoned environmental “actionist” who had been involved in community action on water issues in Centre-Wellington Township, just to the north of Guelph, including a battle opposing a 2002 proposal for water bottling at a site on Middlebrook Road².

1 One example of their early work ended up as a full-page advertisement in the *Guelph Tribune* in mid-2007, and has uncanny relevance still. [See page 19.](#)

2 See “[2002: Early battle in Elora](#)” for a summary of this battle.

Mike Nagy had also been the federal candidate and a visible leader in the Green Party's rise to prominence in Guelph in the mid-2000s, and in that capacity had become vocal regarding the Dolime Quarry, a limestone quarry located just outside of Guelph in Guelph-Eramosa Township, among other things. In late 2006, just as Mark Goldberg was making inquiries about Nestlé's water taking in the area, a report emerged showing that the Dolime Quarry also posed significant risk to local groundwater supplies, drawing City of Guelph officials and local environmentalists and water conservationists, including Mark Goldberg, Arlene Slocombe, and Mike Nagy, into action. The Dolime issue was not Nagy's first experience of water activism, but it did solidify a role in the emerging Wellington Water Watchers. He went on to serve as a member of WWW's board of directors and as its second board chair for the next decade.

Another person at the kitchen table meeting in the spring of 2007 was a member of the executive of the local chapter of the Council of Canadian (CoC). The CoC and their national chairperson, Maude Barlow, had national and international recognition as a leader in water justice advocacy. In addition to its involvement in advocacy to protect public services and its direct ties to the community-based, decade-long fight to keep Walmart from establishing a presence in Guelph³, the local chapter of the CoC already had an active local presence on water issues. In 2006, in fact, the CoC chapter executive found herself at the centre of a campaign to promote locally sustainable development and water use by opposing a proposal to build a pipeline to Lake Erie as a means overcoming the impediments to development posed by local water supply and discharge limitations.

Around the same time, the local chapter of the Council of Canadians also starting hearing concerns about Nestlé's water-taking for bottling in Aberfoyle. The CoC chapter executive recalls that her involvement in WWW began sometime in early 2007, when a national member of the CoC who lived in Puslinch, near the Nestlé plant, approached her with a groundwater concern. She said, "I know you are concerned about water, you need to pay attention to what is happening: my creek is dried up, and it's because Nestlé is taking water."

With mounting groundwater concerns in the community, the CoC decided to invite hydrogeologist Stan Denhoed to attend their



Arlene Slocombe



"You need to pay attention to what is happening: my creek is dried up, and it's because Nestlé is taking water."

— A Council of Canadians member

3 See "[The Walmart Story](#)" by Ben Bennett. *The Guelph Background*, December 17, 2016.

next meeting to give them a “Groundwater 101” presentation. His presentation reinforced their concern. Following the presentation, the CoC chapter executive recalls, “We were all irate.”

Shortly thereafter, on February 13, 2007, the emerging Wellington Water Watchers held a by-invitation community meeting in the Cooperators’ building in downtown Guelph. While billed as an opportunity to learn about Nestlé’s permit application, people arrived equipped with information and updates to share about the Dolime Quarry and other threats to local water security as well:

There is a meeting in the Cooperators Bldg next Tues re Nestlé’s water-taking... I would like to hand out info on the Dolime permit since there will be a lot of activists there that weren’t at COC. (Email correspondence between Council of Canadians Chapter members, February 10, 2007)

The meeting was well-attended, and there was a great deal of enthusiasm for the formation of the Wellington Water Watchers to lead advocacy on these issues. According to one attendee, in fact, a vote was held at that meeting to officially recognize the new organization and to affirm the name. Board members for the new non-profit organization were recruited from among those already involved. Before too long, a process was initiated that would lead to the incorporation of the Wellington Water Watchers in April 2008.



Aerial view of the Dolime Quarry, 2009

Photo: Mike Nagy, Wellington Water Watchers

Dolime Quarry

WHILE INSPIRED to form by the discovery of Nestlé's local water taking for bottling, among the first actions of the emerging Wellington Water Watchers was to join the City of Guelph in drawing attention to the risks to Guelph's drinking water supply posed by the Dolime Quarry, located along the City of Guelph's western border in the neighbouring township of Guelph-Eramosa. Owned since 2002 by River Valley Developments, a subsidiary of the Carson Reid Ltd., and excavated since 2005 by James Dick Construction, what became known as the "Dolime Quarry" had been operating since the early 1850s⁴.

In 2006, as Mark Goldberg began talking to people and asking questions about Nestlé, news became public of James Dick Construction's plan to apply in February 2007 for the permits needed to nearly double the rate of aggregate extraction at the Dolime Quarry.


⁴ For details and sources, see Piper, L. (2007). [Quarries and quarrymen: The limestone industry in Guelph](#). *Historic Guelph*, 46. (Publication of the Guelph Historical Society)

Not only would this plan involve an acceleration of water removal from the gravel pit, but evidence began to emerge — eventually published in the 2008 Ontario Geological Survey — that the quarrying activities had created a rupture in the aquitard (a protective layer of hard stone covering the aquifer), thereby exposing nearby wells that Guelph

relies upon for drinking water to contaminants trickling in from the surface.

By this time, Mark had been appointed to the Lake Erie Source Protection Committee (LESPC) as a “public interest” representative, alongside representatives from First Nations, industry, and municipalities, including the City of Guelph. The City had expressed its concerns to the provincial government about the risks

posed by excavation and dewatering in the Dolime Quarry from as early as 2003, culminating in a series of communications between the Mayor of Guelph and the Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment in the fall of 2007.⁵ From his position as public interests representative, Mark repeatedly raised the issue at the LESP, and from the emerging platform that would become the Wellington Water Watchers, he joined others in raising awareness of the issue and calling for action at a community level. The controversy generated considerable discussion



Evidence began to emerge that Dolime quarrying activities had created a rupture in the aquitard (a protective layer of hard stone covering the aquifer), thereby exposing nearby wells that Guelph relies upon for drinking water to contaminants trickling in from the surface.

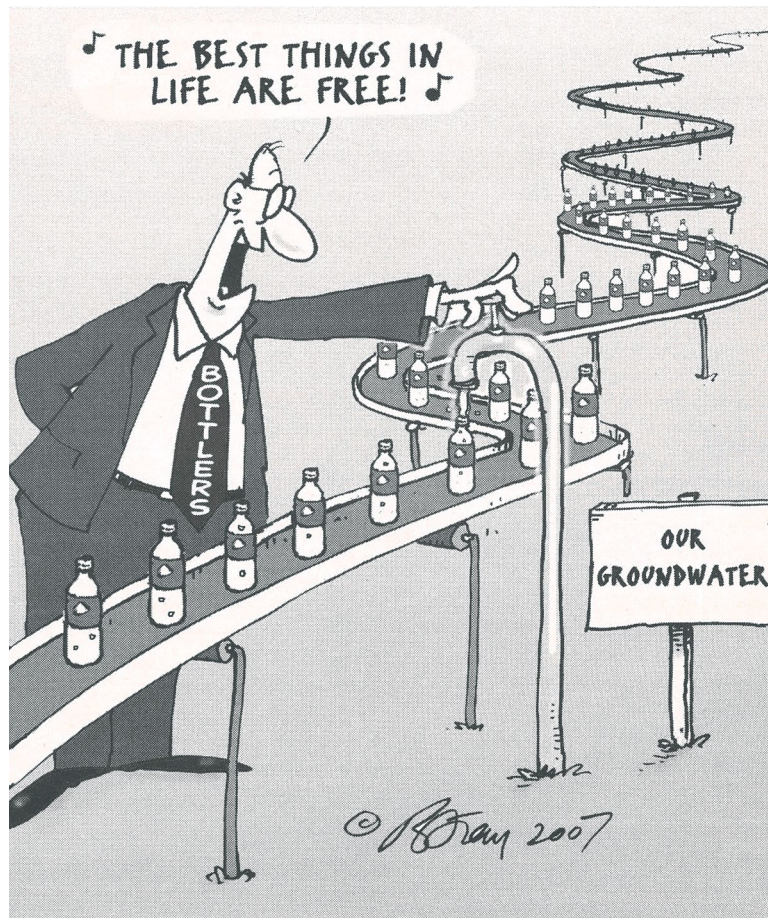
5 According to a letter from the Office of the Mayor of Guelph to the Ministry of Natural Resources Guelph District Office, dated December 22, 2008, the City of Guelph wrote to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) on November 29, 2007 to formally request “a technical review of the operation and licensing of the Guelph Dolime Quarry” due to “the City’s belief that the current quarry operation threatens and endangers the City’s water supply...” On November 4, 2008, the MNR’s District Office replied with a review finding that the City’s wells will not be adversely impacted by the aggregate operations in the Dolime quarry. By December 2008, however, according to the letter from the Mayor’s office, new evidence had surfaced suggesting that “the risks to the City’s water supply have increased substantially as a result of the excavation by the quarry of the protective layer.” In the December 22, 2008 letter, therefore, the City requested that (1) the MNR “immediately limit the extent of the extraction of the quarry;” (2) the MNR and Ministry of Environment “re-review the potential impacts of the quarry given the new and additional information obtained from the OGS [Ontario Geological Survey];” (3) the MNR add a condition on the quarry’s aggregate license to require mitigation;” and (4) that the MNR notify the City of any proposed changes to the blasting program in the quarry. A subsequent letter was sent from the Mayor’s office on July 28, 2009, reinforcing the request for an updated technical review and demanding that the record “clearly state that the City’s aquifer is now exposed in the quarry,” and that “the previous November 4, 2008 opinion can no longer be supported.” These communications continued until the City of Guelph eventually filed leave to appeal a water-taking permit for the quarry on February 13, 2013.

and activity in the community, bringing a whole other element of groundwater protection to the attention of the emerging Wellington Water Watchers.⁶

The Dolime Quarry issue is still unresolved in 2019, and the Wellington Water Watchers has remained active on that issue over the interim⁷. As the timeline for comment and immediate action on the Dolime Quarry applications came to a close in early 2007, however, WWW's focus turned quickly back to Nestlé. With Nestlé's permit for water taking in Aberfoyle due for renewal in April, only a couple months away, WWW knew would need to act fast.

6 For more background on the Dolime Quarry, see ["Water, quarries, construction, growth, and Guelph,"](#) *The Guelph Backgrounder* (August 13, 2017).

7 During the Wellington Water Watchers' Nestlé campaign, work continued on the Dolime Quarry file with WWW board members and volunteers continuing to gather information, track developments, raise public awareness, and express concerns. Activity on this file spiked in late 2008, following the publication of evidence showing the aquitard breach in the quarry. The company was forced to respond, and in 2011, WWW submitted comments to the Ministry of Environment (MOE) critiquing a management plan proposed by the quarry owners to mitigate the risks to source water at the quarry, as did the City of Guelph. In the same year, Ryerson film student Kristy Neville directed a 12-minute documentary entitled *Dolime Dilemma: Waterproof?* that featured WWW volunteers and summarized the core issues. Despite the objections, in 2013, the MOE enabled ongoing excavation at the site with the approval of a permit to take water amendment. Dissatisfied with the lack of attention to the identified risks, on February 4, 2013, the City of Guelph filed for leave to appeal the permit amendment. On Feb. 13, 2013, WWW brought together the local candidates of all four main provincial political parties for a conference designed to show all-party support for the City's application. On May 2, 2014, the Environmental Review Tribunal granted the City leave to appeal the amended permit to take water granted to the quarry operators, and eventually determined that the decision to amend and extend the permit to take water at the Dolime quarry was unreasonable and could result in significant environmental harm. As of August 2019, the case remains unresolved and, since 2014, locked in a closed-door legal process as the parties negotiate a resolution.



Cartoon from the April 24, 2007
Guelph Tribune
Courtesy of Brian Fray

The 2007 Nestlé Campaign

AT THE EARLY kitchen-table meeting where the Wellington Water Watchers got its name, the group began to develop a strategy to protect the community's groundwater.

One step the group took was to develop a clearer understanding of the technical aspects of groundwater taking and the associated risks. For this, WWW turned to a number of sources, including Dr. Hugh Whiteley, a retired water resources engineering professor at University of Guelph and a long-time local environmental advocate. Nagy had known Hugh since the early 1990s, and he knew that Hugh would be helpful in explaining the implications of groundwater taking to them. With Hugh's input, the group was able to crystallize a few key issues for their campaign against Nestlé's water taking for bottling.

For one thing, although the aquifer Nestlé was drawing from is rather large, in Hugh's analysis, no one knew exactly how much water it contained—or at what rate the water replenishes itself. From this realization emerged an analogy that can still be heard, in different

forms, in WWW networks in 2019: “It’s like writing a cheque without knowing how much money is in your bank account, how much or when more money is coming in, or how many other cheques are outstanding,” as Arlene Slocombe put it.

Around the same time, in early 2007, a WWW volunteer was alerted by a friend to an upcoming open house at the Nestlé Waters Canada national headquarters and bottling plant in Aberfoyle. Unable to contain her curiosity, and seeing it as an opportunity to gather more intel, she and her husband attended along with hundreds of other guests. After listening to a guide boast about the plant’s cleanliness and organization, groups of about 25 people were brought through one of numerous warehouses and mechanized production lines. As the volunteer recalls it:

I had never been in a warehouse that big before. And it wasn’t just one warehouse, it was warehouse and warehouse and warehouse. It was a good half hour to walk through. [There were] towering piles of these plastic bottles, all held together by plastic film, ready to ship out.

As discreetly as she could, in those days before smart phones, the WWW volunteer took out her camera and snapped some photos. She was shocked by the massive operation and took as many pictures as she could. At the next WWW board meeting, the volunteer passed the pictures around. They too were shocked by the scale of the operation. Those very same photos were then used on the first website for the Wellington Water Watchers.

Bolstered by all they were learning, the Wellington Water Watchers got to work raising community awareness of the Nestlé permit issue through a series of town hall meetings, by setting up a booth and talking to people at the Guelph Farmers’ Market every Saturday morning, by speaking at community events, and through media advocacy. These were low-budget days, where those involved pitched in to cover the costs of printing, advertisements in the local paper, and other incidentals. “The biggest sort of resource was people’s time,” one founding volunteer told us. Nonetheless, at some point in this early phase, as both momentum and costs started to add up, the group decided to sign people up as members as a means of keeping track of interested people and as a way to raise some funds through a \$10 membership fee:

It wasn’t like we had to do fundraising or anything like that. I think we actually started a membership. I can’t remember how all of that went originally, but through membership came a fee, came some fundraising to pay for events, you know the minutia. (Founding volunteer)



Wellington Water Watchers embraced the idea of promoting the use of stainless steel water bottles as an opportunity to be “pro” something, rather than just anti-Nestlé,” and as a visible representation of what the group stood for.

“We had a post office box where you could send in your \$10, become a member, and we had quite a few people join,” another founding member recalled. “I think about a thousand people.”

Associated with the membership drive, also quite early on (“right away,” one founding volunteer said, maybe even at the initial kitchen table meeting), Arlene Slocombe proposed the idea of distributing re-fillable, stainless steel water bottles as an alternative to single-use plastic water bottles. The group embraced the idea as an opportunity “to be ‘pro’ something,” as Nagy put it, rather than just anti-Nestlé, and as a visible representation of what WWW stood for. Someone found a source and ordered 200 of them with the Wellington Water Watchers logo and “Guelph’s water: yours to enjoy, conserve and protect” printed on them. The bottles were used to recruit new members. Anyone who signed on as a member and paid the membership fee was given a bottle.

The bottles were also used as display items on tables at community events, where they generated visibility, conversation, and engagement. Plastic Nalgene refillable bottles were fairly common already among the environmentally minded, but stainless steel water canteens were quite new and quickly became quite popular. Before long, the WWW bottles became a ubiquitous, visible symbol of an emerging local movement to assert sustainable, public water use against commodification and plastic. When the first 200 were gone, WWW ordered more.

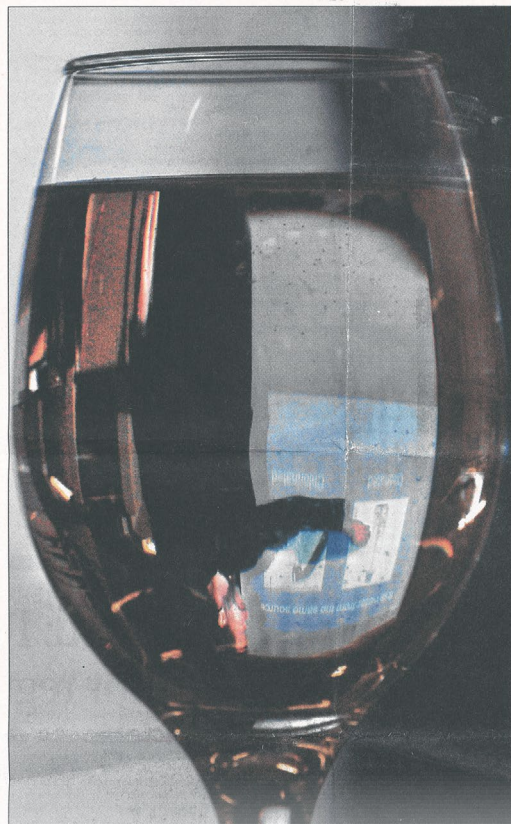
In their inquiries into the process through which companies like Nestlé and other parties receive permits for large-scale groundwater taking in Ontario⁸, WWW had discovered that the submission of an application for a permit or permit renewal would trigger a 30-day period in which the public could comment on the permit. When Nestlé Waters’ application was posted to the Ontario Environmental Registry on April 2, 2007,⁹ the Wellington Water Watchers was ready. As a primary tactic, WWW decided that they would organize a [postcard campaign](#) to try and swamp the Ministry Environment with letter of opposition to the permit application from as many people in Guelph and Wellington County as possible. “We are going to flood them,” a founding volunteer remembers members saying to each other. “We are going to let them know that people don’t like this.” On the eve of the opening of the public comment period (April 11–May 11, 2007), WWW rented a church

⁸ According to Section 34 of the Ontario Water Resources Act (1990), anyone taking more than a total of 50,000 litres of water in a day in Ontario is required to obtain a permit from the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks.

⁹ [EBR Registry Number: 010-0224; Ministry Reference Number: 0275-6ZSQSL](#)



GUELPH MERCURY



Mark Goldberg is reflected in a glass of water as he makes a presentation to the Wellington Water Watchers meeting at Norfolk United Church on Tuesday.

Water battle brews

Grassroots organization takes on water bottler

By JOANNE SHUTTLEWORTH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

As the folks who turned up for a meeting of the Wellington Water Watchers raised a glass — of tap water — and toasted the clear, fresh, life-giving liquid, it was an unspoken battle cry.

Nestle is the new Wal-Mart. On Tuesday night, some 80 people attended the second meeting of the Wellington Water Watchers, a group concerned with water issues in Guelph and Wellington County.

It marked the stirrings of another grassroots resistance to a multinational corporation, echoing the decade-long battle to keep Wal-Mart out of the city.

While the water group advocates conservation, the project of the day is a postcard campaign to keep Nestle Waters Canada from obtaining a permit that, if approved, would allow the Aberfoyle company to take up to 3.6 million litres of water a day for the next five years.

Nestle has been granted permits every two years since it took over Aberfoyle Springs in

2001. The amount has increased each time, from 1.1 million litres a day in 2001 to 3.6 million litres a day in 2005.

The latest application is for the same amount of water. But Mark Goldberg, a Water Watchers organizer, is concerned the company wants a five-year permit this time.

SEE WATER: PAGE A2

GETTING INVOLVED

- You can comment on this application until May 2.
- To comment, log on to the Environmental Registry site at www.ebr.gov.on.ca. Quote the EBR number 010-0224.
- You can mail a letter to: West Central Region, Permit To Take Water Evaluator, Ministry of the Environment, West Central Regional Office, Floor 12, 119 King Street West, Hamilton, Ont., L8P 4Y7.
- For more information about the permit and the campaign, visit www.wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca.

Recalls

INSIDE

Expect lots of resting cows

Guelph Mercury, front page,
April 12, 2007

basement and held a public meeting to launch the campaign¹⁰.

The response from the community was fast and strong:

People were outraged, and so it certainly wasn't hard to find allies, people who had time or energy to jump on board as well. Certainly in my work later in the organization, it was hard to find any body who was sort of

¹⁰ It was at these public meetings that a tradition began of opening WWW meetings with a "toast to water" — a tradition that is still practiced in 2019 at WWW Annual General Meetings. Mark Goldberg describes its origins: "We would start with a toast. Everybody had a glass of water. We would just toast water and thank that water serves all our biological needs, and the fact that we need water for life."

pro-water-taking or pro-Nestlé. It was pretty easy to find people who would stand up against it. (WWW founding volunteer)

“People were receptive for sure,” recalls Mark Goldberg, “And it was exciting because it made us feel ‘oh, there’s an audience for this; maybe we have a chance!’”

To promote participation in the postcard campaign, WWW reached out to partner groups and networks and provided them with postcards to distribute, and they ramped up their own outreach. “Whenever there was an event and the public,” Mark Goldberg recalls, “we would set up a booth, we would have stainless steel water bottles for sale for five bucks, along with postcards for people to sign. If you bought one, you would never have to buy a single-use disposable plastic bottle again.”

WWW volunteers went wherever they could find an audience and recruited other volunteers to sell bottles and take bundles of postcards to circulate through their networks too¹¹. Before long, the stainless steel bottles bearing WWW’s logo became a must-have item for anyone with environmental or politically progressive leanings in Guelph and area. The strategy was simple and it was very grassroots. As another founding volunteer described it:

It was literally just finding the places in the community. I mean, we were just looking for willing community members to put their name and comments on a card. It was about as basic as you can get. I mean, I think I bought the paper [for the postcards] myself!



Before long, the stainless steel bottles bearing WWW’s logo became a must-have item for anyone with environmental or politically progressive leanings in Guelph and area.

To reinforce the outreach, WWW created flyers and information bulletins. At one point they took out a full-page ad in the free community newspaper, *Guelph Tribune* (see next page). They organized entertaining events designed to raise money and awareness and assemble a crowd of postcard-signers—parties at homes,

a rally with entertainment at a local brew pub, a golf tournament, and at least one house concert.

As the campaign ramped up, WWW also entered into dialogue with the CEO of Nestlé Waters Canada. At one point, Nestlé hired a local

¹¹ Author’s note: My introduction to WWW and the Nestlé Campaign was at my children’s school bus stop in May 2007, where a neighbour — a friend of Arlene Slocombe, Mike Nagy, and James Gordon — was talking up the campaign and handing out postcards.

environmental consulting group to help mediate the conversation between Nestlé Waters Canada and WWW. While clear that the parties held opposing perspectives, WWW described the Nestlé CEO as a friendly and reasonable person. One early volunteer shared this anecdote:

I did a concert here at my house with musician Stephen Fearing and author Tom King. And I invited the president of Nestlé to the event. And [laughter] and she came! Oh yeah, I mean I'd had meetings with her already—a bunch of us had. And you know, she's a nice enough person and very matter of fact, and very clear with us saying that she has to do her job, her job is to sell bottled water. And these are some of the things we wanted in contradiction to that. And she has to fight against that—it wasn't personal at all.

Mark Goldberg remembers her levelling with him. She explained that “if I stopped pumping and bottling groundwater, they'd just fire me and hire someone else to do it.”

Ultimately, the dialogue with Nestlé Waters Canada went nowhere. The relationship with the Nestlé executive soured a bit as Fearing, expressing the growing resentment in the community of Nestlé's presence there, made a sarcastic comment from the stage directed at the CEO, and as, with the growing momentum of the campaign, the positions of the opposing parties became increasingly polarized. In the midst of the campaign, moreover, the CEO resigned from her position and was replaced, ending that relationship.

In terms of raising awareness of the issue, WWW's campaign was a great success. Local media picked up the story with headlines and editorial cartoons. On Earth Day (April 23, 2007), Federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May made a special trip to Guelph to lend her profile

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The Province of Ontario allows Nestle Canada Inc. to take **3.6 million litres of water** every day from the public drinking water supply, which will not last forever. Nestle pays nothing for the water, which is sold in plastic bottles for **more than the price of gasoline**.

Much of it leaves Ontario.

1. Growth threatens our supply of drinking water.

Guelph is growing faster than most Toronto satellite cities because it's a desirable and still-affordable place to live. The provincial government has projected that we will have as many as 130,000 additional residents within 20 years. That will more than double our water-taking needs. The present wells will not be able to meet the demand. Then what? Water conservation is the only prudent choice.

2. Nobody knows how much water we have.

We don't know how much water there is underground. The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, which issues Permits To Take Water, is supposed to operate by the Precautionary Principle—as if there are limits, unless you have proof otherwise. But they are giving away our grandchildren's drinking water as if there are no limits.

3. Nestle is permitted to take 3.6 million litres a day.

Nestle Canada Inc. operates a water pumping and bottling plant in Aberfoyle. Under the outdated

provincial water-taking permit system, the company is legally allowed to take 3.6 million litres a day from our aquifer. It can also take 1.1 million litres a day from the Hillsburgh area. That water is trucked to Aberfoyle for a total of 4.7 million litres. Each day.

4. They pay nothing for it.

Under current regulations, Nestle pays nothing for the water it takes and sells. There is a very small permit fee. That's it. On April 3, the provincial government introduced a bill that will impose a charge on water bottlers. The cost to Nestle for the daily take of 4.7 million litres will total \$770 per day! Using a conservative estimate of 25¢ per litre, the profit on that water—which is a public resource—would be over \$1 million. Each day.

5. A crucial principle of water protection is being ignored.

The key principle of ground-water protection is: don't remove water from a watershed. Justice O'Connor, in his report on the Walkerton tragedy, said that water should be managed on a watershed basis. When water is removed from a watershed, the water table gradually declines. Wetlands dry up, habitats are lost, and drinking supplies are imperiled.

But water bottled by Nestle in Aberfoyle is shipped all over the continent. You can even buy it in Japan over the Internet.

6. The Ontario government isn't protecting our water supply.

At a time when everyone is worried about long-term water supply, the provincial government has allowed Nestle to take more than one billion litres of our drinking water for free. When Nestle applied to renew its permit in 2005, the Township of Puslinch asked the government not to increase the amount that can be taken under the permit. That request was denied. Ominously, the spring-fed groundwater that flows into Mill Creek, which runs within 100 metres of the Nestle bottling plant, gets sucked back into the ground when Nestle is pumping. This “flow reversal” is similar to the situation that caused the Walkerton tragedy when surface water contaminated groundwater.

7. Nestle plans to dramatically expand its bottling plant this year.

The thirst for profit is unquenchable. Nestle has applied to Puslinch Township to increase its plant size by almost 50 percent. It already occupies 490,000 square feet. The additional space

will make the plant huge. Most multinational corporations have one overriding goal: relentless growth. They recognize no limits. All natural systems have limits. That is a contradiction that must be addressed before it's too late.

8. The waste from plastic water bottles is obscene.

Waste is a huge and growing problem in Ontario. Landfills are overburdened. Incineration is a worrisome and expensive alternative. Packaging is largely to blame. Plastic water bottles are among the most unnecessary and wasteful packaging—used once then thrown away. Nestle creates millions of plastic water bottles per day. Many end up in landfills. They have almost no recycling value.

9. Paying for water that is a public resource is wrong.

The groundwater in the Guelph-Amabel aquifer belongs to the people who live in this region. Not the government. Not Nestle. It belongs to us. And we will need it for many generations to come. Paying a large foreign corporation for the privilege of drinking our own water from throw-away plastic bottles seems very wrong. If you drink Nestle's water, you are paying more than 1,000 times what tap water costs. Typically, bottled water costs more per litre than gasoline.

10. Consuming water from plastic bottles is a health risk.

Most people think bottled water is healthier. Not necessarily. Chemicals leach from the plastic bottle after long storage or in warm conditions. One of these, Bisphenol-A is an endocrine disruptor at low doses. Besides, what's the point? The water in Nestle's bottles comes from the same source as our tap water in Guelph, except theirs is ozonated and ours is chlorinated. Leave the tap water in a pitcher overnight and the chlorine evaporates. Your money is wasted when you purchase bottled water.

What's wrong with this picture?
10 THINGS.



WHAT YOU CAN DO - 3 THINGS:

1. TELL

the Ontario government that you object to the renewal of Nestle's Permit to Take Water in Aberfoyle. Visit www.WellingtonWaterWatchers.ca and briefly comment on the Province's Environmental Registry before May 2, 2007. Please act now. That deadline is coming fast!

2. JOIN

Wellington Water Watchers. Send \$25 along with your name, address, and e-mail address to: Wellington Water Watchers P.O. Box 26036, Guelph ON N1E 6V8 info@waterwatchers.ca

3. DONATE

Help us do our work. Send your cheque to the address at left. **DRAW THE LINE** - between today and your grandchildren's future. Tell the Ontario Government there are limits.

FREE! With every membership:
Klean Kanteen non-leaching stainless steel water bottle.

The full page ad that the Wellington Water Watchers ran in the *Guelph Tribune* (circa April, 2007) had a significant role introducing the issue to Guelph citizens.

WRITING: TONY LEIGHTON · DESIGN: GARETH LIND

and voice to the campaign. Shortly thereafter, on May 2, the local chapter of the Council of Canadians packed a church hall with an audience to hear CoC National Chair (and soon-to-be Special Advisory to UN Special Advisor on Water) Maude Barlow provide some big-picture context and rally the community.

That summer, Hillside Festival raised the bar for all environmentally friendly music festivals by going plastic-bottle free, providing instead — with the help of volunteers from WWW — free, public tap water brought in by tanker truck.

Clearly feeling the pressure, Nestlé Waters Canada responded by holding its own community meetings, taking out advertisements in the newspaper, and sending promotional flyers to every household in Guelph in an attempt to allay fears and undermine opposition.

In terms of flooding the Ministry with letters of opposition, too, the postcard campaign was a resounding success. Exactly how many postcards were printed, and what happened to them all, was not carefully tracked. At least 10,000 postcards were printed and distributed, according to one lead volunteer of the time. Many were mailed in directly to the Ministry of the Environment. Many more were signed and returned to WWW.

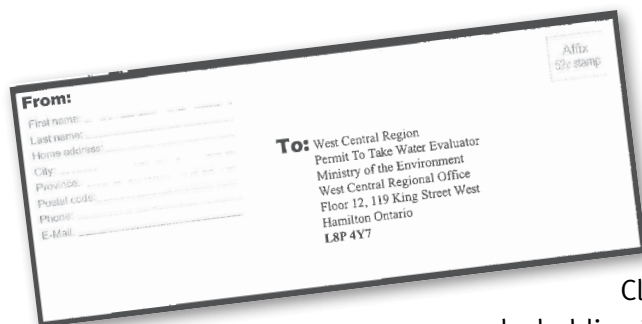
“On the day that the application comment period closed,” Mark Goldberg recalls, “I drove to Hamilton to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment’s district regional office with boxes and boxes of these post cards that had been filled out. They were overwhelmed.”

What is known for certain is that the Ministry of the Environment received over 8,000 submissions opposing the Nestlé permit application that year, surpassing any previous opposition ever mounted against a permit posted to the Environmental Registry:

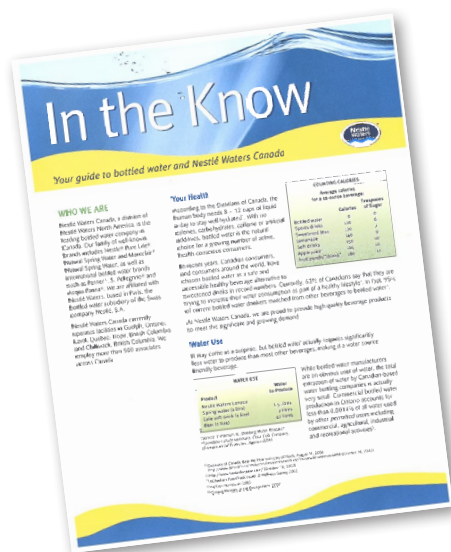
“They had only ever had a couple of hundred comments on these type of permits,” Nagy explained. “So it kinda blew the doors off the numbers and put it on the map; it showed that people were outraged by [the permit application].”

In addition to the sheer number of responses, WWW and some other permit opponents in their submissions pointed to the MOE evidence suggesting that Nestlé’s water taking in Aberfoyle might causing some reversal of water flow in the nearby Mill Creek. The evidence had been buried deep within a consultant’s report on Nestlé’s water taking in Aberfoyle, but discovered upon close analysis by Hugh Whitely. The response was strong enough that decision-making on the permit stalled.

As they awaited the Ministry’s decision, WWW regrouped, retooled, and continued outreach and media advocacy to keep the issue visible. The process of incorporating as a non-profit organization had already



At least 10,000 postcards were printed and distributed.



A Nestlé information sheet countered (and graphically mimicked) WWW's campaign.



GUELPH MERCURY

Greens enter water fight

Elizabeth May in Guelph to lend support to water protection group

By LAURA THOMPSON
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

The leader of the Green party has lent her voice to a local group of water conservation advocates trying to stop Nestle from taking local water and then bottling it.

Elizabeth May made a special trip to Guelph this weekend to speak on behalf of the Wellington Water Watchers who recently mounted a campaign over their concerns about bottled water, specifically the type being bottled locally by Nestle.

The group started to target the corporation after Nestle Waters Canada filed an application to take up to 3.6 million litres of water a day for the next five years from the Algonquin site.

water are obvious.

"The city is going to run out of water. We're giving it away for free. They (Nestle) put it in plastic bottles and sell it back to us for more than the price of gas. Something's wrong here," he said.

Speaking outside the Old Quebec Street mall, May told a crowd of 200 the issue of bottled water is an international one, though Guelph can set an example by putting an end to the practice.

"Bashing Nestle is not the purpose of Wellington Water Watchers, so they'll have to leave it up to me," she told the crowd, who responded with cheers.

She explained privatization of public water resources drains aquifers and creates unnecessary litter in the form of plastic bottles that could leak carcinogens.

"It's a mixture of environmental and economic issues," she said.



Green Leader Elizabeth May came to Guelph Saturday to lend support to the Wellington Water Watchers rally. She also took in some of the Earth Day events happening around downtown.

"The bottled water industry is essentially a very slick sales job based on fashion, trends and fads that make people think they're doing something good for themselves," she said.

ed for Nestle's application to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment has been extended until May 11. For more information about how to comment on the application, visit www.moe.gov.on.ca.

"This isn't just a local issue. It's an international issue, and perhaps where we draw the line and say 'Bottling public water stops here'."

The Mercury was unable to

Hillside headir inside

Group gets funding for winter festi

By RON O'FLANAGAN
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

The feverish Hillside will heat up the city's town next winter.

Festival organizers have dreamed of staging a version of the popular music during the cold season. clal purse strings open week to help them do it. The first instalment of inside will invade the Sports and Entertainment tree on Saturday Feb. 2, 2008. Sam Baljal, longtime director of the festival, Hillside Inside will be an annual event.

"We have a home or land (at Guelph Lake in the mer), but now we want a town," he said before a audience of festival inside supporters.

The festival began 2 ago in Riverside Park. "If we take the popu the festival and move it town, people can experie side and shake off the blahs," he said. "We are g fill the place up, attract a l tenton to the downtown and particularly to the Sports and Entertainment re."

The Ministry of Tourism Celebrate Ontario gram was set up to expose tourists for Ontario festi Liz Sandals, MPP for G Wellington. She announce side will receive \$60,000 side inside — \$20,000 to a the new winter prog \$100,000 to market it.

The Mercury was unable to

Mercury
May 3, 2007
Front Page

Keep up water fight: Barlow

By SCOTT TRACY
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Maude Barlow came to Guelph last night to share her own version of an inconvenient truth about what's happening with the planet's water.

"We are creating the ground-level equivalent of global warming," the national chairperson of the Council of Canadians told about 300 people at Norfolk Street United Church. "We are drying out the ground from below."

Barlow said about two billion people live in "water-stressed areas of the world," adding while most of these are in Third World countries, developed nations such as Australia are also "hitting the water wall."

In fact, Barlow said, every day more children die from lack of water than from HIV, malaria, war and accidents combined.

Her presentation in Guelph was co-sponsored by the Guelph chapter of the Council of Canadians and by Wellington Water Watchers, a recently formed grassroots organization dedicated to protecting local drinking water.

SEE WATER: PAGE A2



DRUMMIN IN CITY PA

Hundreds of hands me beat of drums yesterday drummer Fulé Badoe, Guelph from Ghana in

On Earth Day, Federal Green Party leader Elizabeth May made a special trip to Guelph to lend her profile and voice to the WWW's campaign. (Guelph Mercury, April 23, 2007)

Hillside Festival raised the bar for all environmentally friendly music festivals by going plastic-bottle free. (Guelph Mercury, July 30, 2007)

Festival: Free water a hit at Hillside

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Baljal, on the phone at 3 p.m., pushed to get Farka Toure onto the island in time. He made it in time to play the tail-end of the workshop show "Gourds and Guitars," and played the mainstage at 7 p.m.

FREE WATER

The big change from last year's festival was free water by the truckful. Last year, bottled water reigned, and the fields were littered with the remnants, Baljal said.

"Water shouldn't cost money," he said. "I mean, what did people do before bottled water?"

The festival secured a milk truck and filled it with Guelph water, dispensed by the Wellington Water Watchers. To grab a drink, thirsty attendees needed only a container. The heat drew people to the truck in droves.

City councillor Mike Salisbury waited in line with his white plastic Hillside stein. The last time he was at Hillside, 10 years ago, Salisbury was working security for the festival. He said Hillside represents Guelph's progressive ideals well. "Things like this," he said, holding up his mug of water. "Water on draught."

Salisbury bought a weekend pass, though he didn't recognize any names performing.

He said he was especially thrilled with the side-stage shows.

Lakeside Lullabies Jam, a fusion of country, jazz and Indian music featuring the Bobob Cowboys and Dya Singh was a festival highlight for Salisbury, as was a bizarre Saturday evening performance by an Amish-looking fellow known as That 1 Guy.

THAT 1 GUY AND

THE WATERSIDE



Travis Scales 30, of Brooklyn, New York, uses a lawn chair to keep the sun off while attending the Guelph Hillside Festival at Guelph lake on Saturday. For more photos, see page A4.

A TRICKY TREK

Getting to Hillside was an ordeal.

ton sextet Shout Out Out Out brought ample bleeps, infectious

tel room. For a dance band, a sampler is essential equipment. The crowd was

Nestlé's water permit renewal a test of new rules, Sandals says

BY ROB O'FLANAGAN
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Nestlé Waters Canada's water-taking permit renewal process is likely being delayed both by a crush of public opposition and the need to review a deluge of water-monitoring data, says Guelph-Wellington MP Liz Sandals.

The process, she said, is a test case for new regulations introduced in 2005, which required Nestlé and other Ontario water-taking operations to more intensely monitor the impacts of pumping large quantities of water.

Sandals said if Nestlé's data, gathered over the last two years, shows a negative impact to the Aberfoyle sub-watershed, the company may be asked to reduce the amount of water it takes in Aberfoyle or it could lose its water-taking permit.

"I think the thing that is really time-consuming is that — because in 2005 the Ministry (of the Environment) imposed very strict monitoring conditions — there is now two years of mon-

itoring data to go through," she said.

Nestlé's permit was renewed in 2005 and was subject to new regulations, including mandatory surface water and private-well monitoring and reporting.

The company was allowed to increase its take to 3.6 million litres per day from two million litres per day, although it sought approval to take up to five million litres per day.

That permit expired June 30 but was temporarily extended pending the outcome of the Ministry of the Environment's assessment of public input and data related to the renewal application.

Nestlé is seeking a five-year permit that maintains the 3.6 million litres per day levels.

Sandals said the new regulations make the permit process more labour intensive and at the same time much improved over what was in place prior to 2005.

The new regulations enable the Environment Ministry to gauge the actual impacts of water taking, she said.

And it gives the ministry the power to turn off the taps if the impacts

are negative.

"Even during the course of the permit, if it appears from the monitoring data or other information that there is a negative impact on the groundwater or surface water, then the permit can actually either be reduced or revoked," she added.

According to documents released this month under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Ministry of Natural Resources officials in Guelph cautioned the Environment Ministry more than two years ago against allowing higher levels of water to be taken from the Mill Creek sub-watershed in Aberfoyle.

They were concerned more demand on the water system — which was already under pressure from drought and heavy use by local sand and gravel businesses — could have a negative impact on the trout fishery.

Conestoga Rovers Associates conducted a 72-hour test in October 2004 to gauge the impact of a sharp increase to pumping levels at Nestlé's main well in Aberfoyle.

The results of that test — including

an apparent reduction in cold groundwater discharge into the creek and reduced groundwater levels, experienced as much as 600 metres from the well — sounded alarm bells among Natural Resources Ministry scientists, who expressed those concerns to the Environment Ministry.

Natural Resources Ministry officials felt their concerns were not addressed.

But Carl Slater, a Ministry of the Environment technical support manager, said the concerns were considered. He said "a miscommunication" is responsible for the Natural Resources officials seemingly feeling their assertions were overlooked.

"The comment we received from (the Natural Resources Ministry) related to a pumping test that was targeting five million litres per day. We shared those concerns and had some of our own. What we approved was just 50 per cent of what Nestlé was looking for."

However, it appears from the released documents that Natural Resources Ministry officials cautioned against any increase in pumping levels,

and wanted the impacts of additional pumping more clearly defined.

The Environment Ministry, however, allowed increased pumping — not at the levels Nestlé wanted, but well above the two-million-litre-per-day level it had been approved to take.

"We also put into the permit a condition that required Nestlé to consult with (the Natural Resources Ministry) about certain monitoring requirements," Slater said. "And we put in additional monitoring requirements and reporting over a two-year period so we could better assess this potential for impact."

Slater said Environment Ministry officials are currently poring over the data in order to make a determination about the impacts of the water taking.

"We want to get it right," he said.

"We want to make sure that all the proper people with the technical and science knowledge are properly engaged. And we want to make sure we go through all of those public comments and make sure we don't miss a thing."

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Guelph Mercury, July 12, 2007

begun — "right off the bat," according to Mark Goldberg — in order to "limit our own individual liability. We had a bank account so we could write cheques on behalf of the Wellington Water Waters; we had to get insurance and all that, so we needed to incorporate." With a fall 2017 Annual General Meeting doubling as campaign rally and an opportunity to formalize board members and objects of incorporation, that process began to take shape. Also in the fall of 2007, WWW took advantage of a provincial election to maintain visibility of the Nestlé issue and to try and establish it as an issue for local candidates:

We did do a bit of a signage campaign around an election period of that time... [although] we were trying not to be overtly political... we did agree that we would put out lawn signs during lawn sign season about water and about asking your candidates their views and where they stood on this. So we were trying to make it an election issues.

A Decision is Rendered

FINALLY, ON APRIL 17, 2008 — a full year after the application was submitted — the MOE posted its decision to the Environmental Registry. In spite of all the opposition in the community, and despite WWW's best efforts, Nestlé would get its permit renewal.

The public comments mobilized by the WWW certainly had slowed the decision-making process down:

Ministry scientific staff who have expertise in water resource management thoroughly reviewed the Puslinch PTTW renewal application and considered all comments before making recommendations. The ministry delayed its

decision in order to carefully assess the potential surface water impacts in Mill Creek and make a sound scientific decision on the permit renewal. (MOE Newsroom backgrounder, April 17, 2008¹²)

To their surprise and great disappointment, however, WWW was to learn that in making its decision, the MOE disregarded the many thousands of WWW postcard submissions as “beyond the scope” of the review process:

Public comments submitted to the Ministry of the Environment as a result of Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) posting (Ref. No. 010-0224) have been assessed by the Ministry. The comments which are considered technical and related to either hydrogeological or surface water issues have been considered. Comments which relate to concerns with MOE Legislation and/or Policy are beyond the scope of the review of this renewal application. (Instrument Decision, EBR # 010-0224; April 18, 2008)

Nagy recalls the frustration felt by all involved in WWW at the time:

We felt super disillusioned about that process and really learned that that process will only truly take comments of a technical nature. So really only from a hydrogeologist; very few people have that capacity to have that kind of information. It kind of felt like it was a bit of a window dressing for process that didn't really have any impact.

Regardless, while the final decision was not the permit denial that WWW and its thousands of supporters wanted, the community action surrounding it did win some significant concessions. “Numerous requests for a two-year term” rather than the five-year term requested by Nestlé, in conjunction with indications of negative hydrogeological impacts of the water-taking on nearby Mill Creek, led the MOE to limit the term of Nestlé’s permit to a two-year period and to include “additional and more comprehensive monitoring conditions” on the permit, “such as increasing the frequency of measurement and the number of gradient monitoring locations as well as habitat and ecological studies” (MOE Instrument Decision, April 18, 2008¹³):

As the Nestlé water taking has the potential to remove water from Mill Creek, a precautionary measure of additional monitoring and testing is required as part of conditions.

12 Archived backgrounder: “[Renewal of Nestlé Water Permit for Puslinch](#),” April 17, 2008. Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

13 MOE Instrument Decision Notice. [EBR# 010-0224](#). April 18, 2008.

Nestlé ruling a small victory

Wellington Water Watchers celebrate as MOE issues restrictive permit to water bottler

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GUELPH — Nestlé Waters Canada did not get what it wanted.

The company was seeking a five-year permit to take water in the Guelph area but got only two years, with new restrictions attached.

An activist group in Guelph is claiming partial victory after the Ontario Ministry of the Environment issued the short and restrictive permit to take water.

“This is one of the most comprehensive water-taking permits ever issued,” said Mark Goldberg, who, along with fellow activist James Gordon, founded Wellington Water Watchers, a group dedicated to protecting water sources in the Guelph area.

Last year, Nestlé sought a five-year permit to extract 3.6 million litres of water per day, but only got a two-year permit at those same extraction rates.

In addition, the company — which runs a major water bottling operation in Aberfoyle, south of Guelph, where it extracts groundwater from the Paris Galt moraine water system — will have to comply with a number of strict conditions aimed at protecting the water source and the natural environment around it.

Nestlé will be subjected to additional monitoring and testing of the water source, with more monitoring locations, more frequently. It will be required to clearly “refine and define” the zone of impact its pumping has on the system, according to a ministry statement.

The company must also conduct and report a “biological inventory” in Mill Creek and implement a so-called stream habitat mapping plan.

Studies appear to show that Mill Creek’s flow reverses at times, which may disturb brown trout spawning areas. Additional monitoring should determine if Nestlé’s pumping is responsible for the flow reversal.

“Overall, we think this is a very positive step forward,” Gordon said yesterday during a news conference along the Speed River.

➤ SEE WATER ON PAGE A2



Roberto Martinez holds a picture of his father. The boy is believed to be in Chile with his mother.

Father

Roberto Martinez engaged in custody battle

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GUELPH — Roberto Martinez sat in a courtroom yesterday, nodding slowly as a judge granted him full custody of his son.

It was a somewhat hollow, though important, victory.

Though legally Martinez has custody of 10-month-old Jaden Alexander Yanez, the boy is believed to be thousands of kilometres away with his mother in Chile.

Martinez, 35, will work with officials of the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services in an effort to have Chilean authorities try to locate and seize Jaden. The Hague Convention on Child Abduction applies.

Breaking free

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GUELPH — Schizophrenia patients in Guelph are substantially less likely to be readmitted to hospital than those in other parts of Canada, a fact the head of the local psychiatric hospital attributes to length of stay and outpatient support.

Nearly 40 per cent of patients hospitalized for schizophrenia across Canada are admitted again within one year, the Canadian Institute of Statistics says.

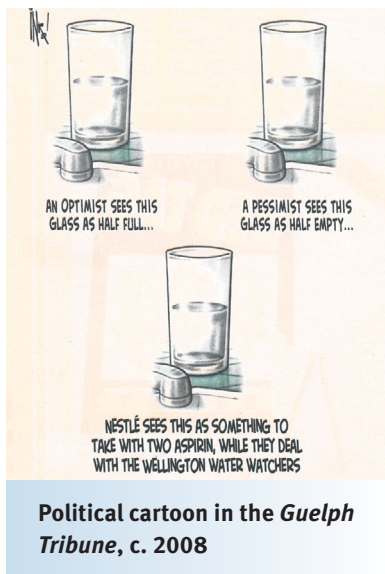


Births-Deaths	B11	Cryptoquote	
Canada	A5	and Jumble	B9
Classified	B8	Editorials	A10
Comics	B3	Horoscope	B2



Casino Da Vinci

Guelph Mercury front page,
April 18, 2008



The permit contains extensive monitoring conditions for both surface water and groundwater. It requires a prolonged pumping test during summer to confirm that previous surface water impacts are not seasonal and to refine and define the zone of groundwater influence from the pumping. Additional surface water monitoring is required. The permit also requires the company to conduct and report on biological inventory in the Mill Creek and to prepare and implement a stream habitat mapping plan. (MOE Newsroom backgrounder, April 17, 2008¹³).

Though inadequate in the view of WWW, the monitoring requirements placed on Nestlé’s water-taking in Aberfoyle as a result of the public outcry, in conjunction with the technical submissions, have remained a permanent part of all subsequent permits.¹⁴⁻¹⁵

What Did the Campaign Accomplish?

WELLINGTON WATER WATCHERS and its many supporters were understandably disappointed that their efforts did not result in the denial the Nestlé permit renewal request. Their efforts, nonetheless, did trigger the imposition of new monitoring requirements, noted above, which set a precedent for future permit applications, and the campaign certainly contributed to some important related developments such as the Hillside Music Festival’s decision to go water bottle free and a (failed) proposal to the City of Guelph to pass a motion ending the sale of bottled water in its buildings and facilities.¹⁶ Both of

¹⁴ Recognizing the futility of resisting or averting the monitoring requirements imposed upon them by the MOE, Nestlé very quickly adopted the monitoring in its public relations and communications as evidence of the company’s proactive commitment to stewardship. See for example “[A rare look inside Nestlé’s Aberfoyle water bottling plant](#)” (Colin Butler, CBC News, Nov. 1, 2016).

¹⁵ Environmental assessment and monitoring requirements for permits to take water for bottling, in fact, were augmented again in 2017, following another round of community mobilization, this time aimed bringing about a permanent end to permits to take water for for-profit bottling in Ontario: Say No To Nestlé.

¹⁶ In summer 2012, activist Robyn Hamlyn, then a high school student from Kingston, Ontario, made presentations to the City of Guelph Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment Committee (July 16) and to Guelph City Council (July 23) requesting that Guelph become a [Blue Community](#) (Council of Canadians) by passing three resolutions concerning public water protection. John Challinor II, then Director of Corporate Affairs for Nestlé Waters Canada, also delegated to the Planning & Environment Committee to enter Nestlé’s objections into the public record (see Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment Committee, July 16: Addendum). On July 23, 2012, Guelph City Council passed Blue Communities resolutions #1 declaring water a human right and #3 opposing privatization of water and wastewater

these developments have proven prescient as other festivals, events, and cities have subsequently started following suit.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the campaign brought water bottling and water governance issue into mainstream consciousness in Guelph and Wellington County, reaching out beyond the established networks of environmental activism to engage a broad base of local residents:



[We had] face-to-face contact with a lot of community members, a lot of typically not-engaged activists—not your usual suspects. People just raising their families, going to work, and coming home and making sure the kids are fed, and watching their show, and getting to bed. When those people were on-side and willing to put their name to paper because they saw it as “ya that’s wrong,” that was a great, a great connection. (founding volunteer)

We shot into the sky with public awareness, and the Wellington Water Watchers name was known a lot of places very quickly.

In the process, the campaign established WWW as a leading voice in local environmental politics. As one founding member put it, “It established WWW as a local voice. That was the biggest win, I would say.”

“We shot into the sky with public awareness” said another early volunteer, “And Wellington Water Watchers name was known a lot of places very quickly.”

Although Nestlé continues to pump and bottle water and distribute millions of plastic bottles into the environment everyday in Wellington County, Ontario, from these beginnings WWW has maintained and continued to build its political influence locally and at the provincial level, and has earned international recognition as leader in the Canadian front in the battler against water bottling¹⁷.

services, but did not entertain a motion on Blue Communities resolution #2 involving the banning of bottled water sales at City events and facilities ([Council Minutes](#), July 23, 2012, pp. 237-239).

“The City does not have a policy in place to prevent the use of bottled water in its facilities. A number of City facilities have water fountains and re-useable bottle water filling stations to encourage the use of tap water and reusable containers. City facilities sell bottled water in vending machines and at concession counters among other varieties of bottled beverages.” (City of Guelph website, “[Questions and answers about Nestlé](#)”, November 30, 2018).


17 For a succinct but comprehensive overview of the battle over water bottling in Wellington County, Ontario (2008–18), including links and archival items, please visit www.wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca/timeline.

our *current* focus

1 *Clean drinking water... ..is our inheritance.*


DoLime Quarry

Wellington Water Watchers have been closely monitoring activities at the DoLime Quarry. The ongoing blasting at this site is **endangering our pristine groundwater source.** The quarry is over 100 years old and all the material that can be safely removed has already been excavated. Continued quarrying at the DoLime site is the greatest threat to the safety of our aquifer. Learn how to help us voice our concern by regularly visiting wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca.



2 *Message in the bottle*


This project, the first of its kind worldwide, will **deliver a stainless steel water bottle to every grade school student** in Guelph and Wellington County. Our goal is to teach the next generation the importance of conservation, sustainability and water responsibility, while setting a precedent in pollution control. Find out about this ambitious project at wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca.



3 *You can't put a price on it.*

Nestle

The Nestle renewal permit of 2007 was the campaign that put Wellington Water Watchers on the map. This coming April, the **Nestle water bottling plant in Aberfoyle will once again be renewing their permit to take water.** We will be ready with an even bigger campaign. Stay informed about our plans by regularly visiting wellingtonwaterwatchers.ca.



join the *many drops* in the bucket!

here's what you can do to help:

- Join WWW for \$10.
- Donate an additional \$20 or more and receive a free stainless steel water bottle
- Become a volunteer.
- Join our e-bulletin list.

Fill out the form on reverse or visit our web site.

The WWW brochure from 2009.

The Next Chapter: Retooling and Refocusing

THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH Wellington Water Watchers learned a lot over the course of the campaign, and the campaign taught local activists some valuable lessons. They learned, for instance, about the reality of activist burnout. As one founding volunteer described it,

Those early days were very challenging. For 2007, 2008, 2009, I was working almost full time as a volunteer for the Water Watchers. That was a problem. I had a business, my partner was very, very generous in letting me do this. You know, after about five years I burned out and I had to sort of step back.

They learned about the importance of building community and having fun. “We need to celebrate more,” said another founding volunteer.

“You have to be able to celebrate your success,” said another. “You’ve done this, you’ve done that. This didn’t work out. That’s still going ahead. You have to be able to be able to pat each other on the back for that.”

“In the early days,” another early volunteer recalled, “We would have that—we would have a bit more grassrootsy fun than we do now.” As Mark Goldberg recalls,

I had read Elizabeth May's book, *How to Save the World in Your Spare Time*, and she stressed that you need to make activism fun. So we focused on that, on keeping everyone engaged. So we would have potluck dinners for meetings. It wouldn't just be a meeting, we would make it a social event too.

"It's important work," one early volunteer said, "But it's more fun and they're great people that you are working with. To be truthful, that's why you don't stop."

Early WWW activists learned a great deal about groundwater systems, Ontario's Permit To Take Water system, and other aspects of water-related policy. They also experienced firsthand the influence that a small group of active people can have, particularly when strategically formed.

I think [our campaign] was just rallying a voice. We were all amazed at the response... It was *much* greater than any of us expected. And I think it was due to our area, to where we are located, and that... this is happening in other places around the world too. (founding volunteer)

On the other hand, they also learned some hard lessons about political process and strategy. It was a serious "reality check" for the group, one early WWW volunteer recalled,

"The legislation didn't really have anything in place for the kind of input we were giving. So our process of showing the greatest opposition ever really didn't change anything about the permit process at that time and or the business model and operation of Nestlé's taking water."

Looking back, another early volunteer described what they now see as a naïve assumption, underlying the 2007 campaign, that if they simply confronted the Ministry with a strong and clear, "Hey, we don't like this, don't do it" that the response would be, "Okay, we're here to represent you!"

"Unless you have so much data, endless amount of data, showing smoking guns and drawdowns of the wells and all sorts of stuff— even, then business as usual carries on," another WWW activist said.

This lesson would inform future tactics, and shapes WWW's strategy in 2020.

New Strategies

WELLINGTON WATER WATCHERS continued to oppose Nestlé permit renewals, but having been unable to stop the 2007/08 permit renewal, WWW leadership decided that a whole



In the Message in the Bottle program, 20,000 students in the Upper Grand District School Board received a stainless steel water bottle with water conservation messages on a bookmark inside.

other approach was needed. Incorporated as a non-profit organization, WWW was now eligible for grants from environmental and other non-profit funders. Having come to understand over the course of the campaign how little people actually knew about their local water supply, WWW leadership decided to apply for funding to support the design and delivery of a water education program and, thinking of how to maximize long-term impacts, they decided on education targeting children:

We realized, in the middle of that campaign, that there were a lot of folks around here who aren't very educated about where our water comes from. So we decided we needed to do an education piece. We also decided that the focus should be kids, because kids learn things; they'll bring it home and inform their families. (founding volunteer)

In 2009, with funding first from the Ministry of Environment "Go Green Fund" and then from Ontario Trillium Foundation, WWW launched the Message in the Bottle Program¹⁸, which took water stewardship information and ideas to Grade 6 students throughout the Upper Grand District School Board. Each student received a stainless steel water bottle with water conservation messages on a bookmark inside. The WWW purchased 25,000 water bottles with a bank loan that Goldberg personally guaranteed. The cartons of water bottles were stored in his garage, then in the treasurer's garage, and then in the garage of another board member, until they were gradually all distributed. With the infusion of funding, not only did WWW deliver water stewardship education to some 20,000 children, but it was able for the first time to rent office space and hire an executive director (Arlene Slocombe) and project staff. The organization thereby gained greater visibility, enduring (if precarious) networks and capacities, and volunteer and community momentum that underpins the organization and its campaigns to this day.

With the completion of Message in the Bottle Program in 2011 and the end of the associated funding commitment, WWW again entered a new chapter in its history. The office was vacated and staff contracts were not renewed. New board members joined as the remaining members of the founding board completed their terms. Priorities shifted and the activity level waned. The foundation had been laid, however, and WWW adapted and upon that foundation renewed itself with even greater strength through the latter half of the decade, all the while punching above its weight in its advocacy on water protection.

¹⁸ Find more information on Message in The Bottle on the interactive timeline of [Groundwater Protection in Wellington County](#).

Conclusion

WHEN MARK GOLDBERG first noticed the trucks pulling out of the Nestlé Waters plant in Aberfoyle in late 2006, the Wellington Water Watchers did not yet exist. Within months, the organization was front page news in Guelph, leading a campaign that mobilized over 8,000 people engage in action, made Nestlé Waters Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment sit up and pay attention, and set the course for local grassroots water protection for at least the next decade.

WWW has faced some significant challenges at different points in its first decade of existence. As a volunteer-based organization with no core funding and limited access to funding from charities and foundations, scaling up and sustaining its impact has proven difficult at times.

Ultimately, nonetheless, from the early foundations of the organization's formation, its initial actions regarding the Dolime Quarry, and its first major campaign opposing Nestlé's water bottling operations in the county, WWW has emerged as a formidable and internationally-recognized leader in the battle against corporate water bottling in Ontario, and an active supporter of community engagement and advocacy around development planning, aggregate quarrying, and a variety of other threats to long term water security in Wellington County and beyond. More than a decade after that initial campaign, its networks and influence continue to grow.

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