

Key campaign notes from CFS-Manitoba and UWSA

- We worked with many local community environmental groups to gain support. Groups in Winnipeg included the Manitoba EcoNetwork, Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, Oxfam, Council of Canadians, Canadian Union of Public Employees, and Public Service Alliance of Canada. Alliances with these groups were essential for building awareness on campus, especially when tabling. Many of these groups were able to also come on campus and distribute water-related materials.
- We met with on-campus environmental groups who were willing to take the issue on. EcoPIA and University of Winnipeg Physical Plant met with the UWSA and CFS to discuss strategy and implementation early on. These groups also took the lead in the education campaign using research materials from the Polaris Institute.
- Following an understanding of student support levels for the initiative, we met with the Campus Sustainability Office (an administrative function of the U of W). The director supported our initiative.
- We then sent a letter to Dr. Axworthy, President of the U of W, for a meeting.
- For this meeting, we prepared a list of like-minded organizations to show broad based support. We cited Washington University's success. We also highlighted the implications of bottled water on the environment. We discussed the gradual elimination of bottled water sales, while ensuring corresponding upgrades to existing water infrastructure. The University set up a water safety audit to examine water infrastructure. Since we understood Dr. Axworthy's background with the United Nations, it was not difficult to discuss with him that water is a basic human right, and the environmental aspects of bottled water.
- Following the meeting, the Administration outlined that student support would be a good idea. A referendum question was submitted to the UWSA General Election and students voted in favour of the question. The University also collected data on how many bottled water units were sold on campus, and student consumer habits.
- Three days after the vote, the University announced the progressive elimination of bottled water sales on campus.
- An awareness campaign was launched to inform students of the ban, and to answer questions and concerns that arose following the announcement. Contacting the local municipality with respect to a municipal public water quality report was very helpful in creating awareness on campus of public water. See: "Bottled Water and YOU of W" poster.

The Elusive Pepsi Contract

Challenging beverage exclusivity contracts is an important part of resisting the commercialization of post-secondary institutions. Gaining access to the contract can be a difficult and lengthy process - it can and has been done by filing Freedom of Information requests. In the case of the University of Winnipeg's bottled water ban, CFS-Manitoba and UWSA worked with the administration to discuss aspects of the contract. It was noted that regardless of the contract, the University has the ultimate say in what products are purchased and sold on campus.

Useful Documents

- Resources at Polaris Institute's **Inside the Bottle** campaign website:
www.insidethebottle.org see: *Building a Bottled Water Free Campus Toolkit* and *Student Awareness to Action Kit*
- **City of Winnipeg Water Quality Report, 2006**
<http://www.winnipeg.ca/WaterandWaste/pdfs/water/waterQuality2006.pdf>

Information on **Washington University's Bottled Water Ban**