

We live in a country where water seems abundant. We have clean potable water available to the majority of us by simply turning on the tap. In the rest of the world, [1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water](#).

Many of these 1.1 billion people would sell a kidney for potable water or give their life for a supply of potable water for their children. Why then, do we buy bottled water?

There is a perception among some people in Canada that our tap water is suspect. Look at Walkerton where 7 people died when agricultural waste leached e-coli into the water supply or at Metro Vancouver where there was a boil water advisory in November 2006 as a large storm breached the watershed. It looks like our water may not be safe. But, where does that bottle water come from? It comes from the same sources as our tap water does in many cases, so if our tap water is not safe how is it safe to put the same water into plastic bottles which they then sell back to us at a price per litre higher than gas.

Here are 3 good reasons to drink tap water

Cost

We complain about the price of a litre of gasoline, but are willing to pay even more for a litre of water. If gas came out of a tap in your house, would you go out and buy it in little plastic containers? If you buy one plastic bottle of water each day for a year, you are spending \$547.50 per year. That is \$547.60 you could put to a better use. Tap water only costs an average of [\\$1.26 for 1000 litres](#) in Canada, so 365 litres will cost you \$0.46 plus the price of a reusable water container. You choose between \$547.50 and \$0.46 annually.

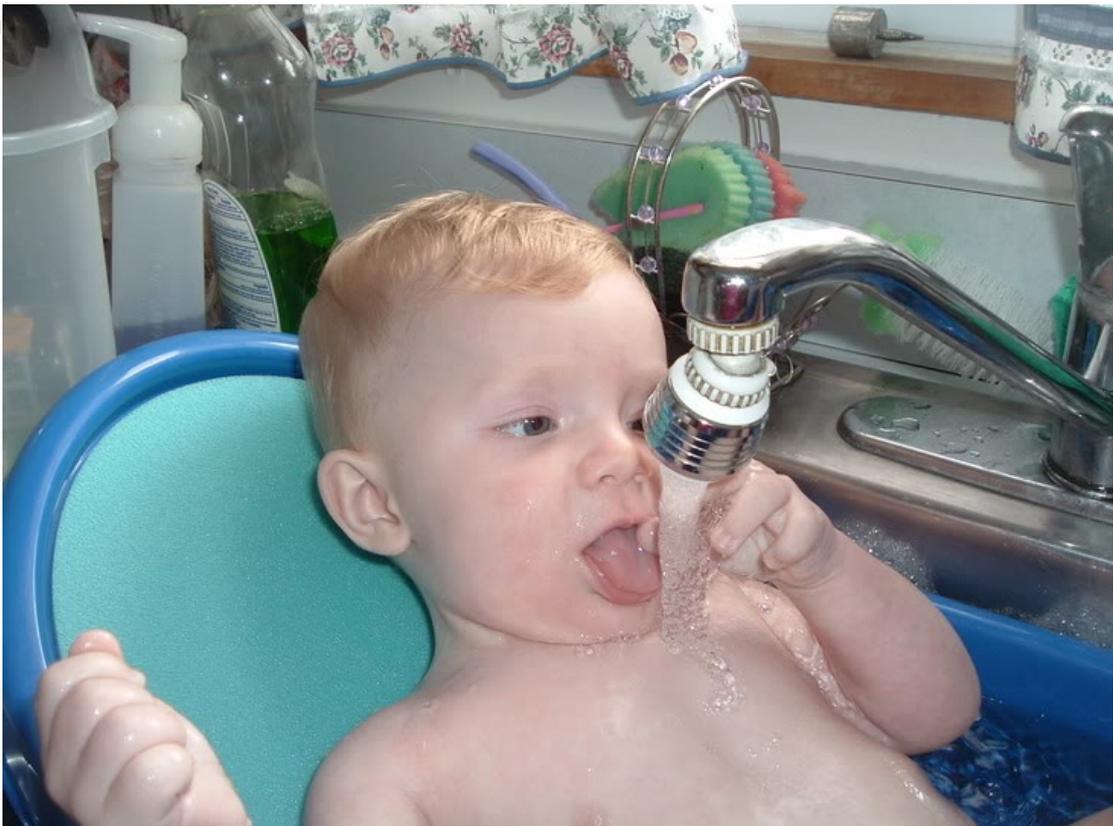
The Environment

Let's do the math on this one. It takes one barrel of oil to make about 5000 water bottles. In Toronto, where they have a successful recycling program, [35% of the 100 million plastic disposable bottles that are discarded each year end up in the landfill](#). That's 35 million plastic bottles or 7000 modified barrels of oil going to the landfill per year. Why? Because we insist on paying extra for tap water in a bottle, and then tossing the bottle in

the garbage.

That brings us to the garbage dilemma. These 100 million bottles tossed in the landfill each year will each take up to 1000 years to biodegrade. How long can the environment sustain this level of toxic, non-biodegradable garbage? Ten years ago, we did not drink bottled water so this is yet another additional burden on our planet.

Your Health



Tap water is regulated by the your Provincial/Territorial Health Authority and bottled water is regulated by Canada's Food and Drugs Act. This means that your tap water is probably tested at least once daily and at several points through out the system while bottled water is tested annually. If you think that contamination can only happen to tap water, think again. Can you think of any food recalls? There have been more food recalls in my town than there have been problems with tap water, and that is probably the same for you.

Another health issue related to regulation include those informative labels that we now have on

our food. I think these labels are great, but they don't always tell the entire story. When it comes to water, the regulations need review for a number of reasons. Here is a quote from [Health Canada](#) with an explanation,

“Apart from setting limits on arsenic and lead, the current Regulations do not contain specific, detailed parameters for chemical and radiological contaminants in bottled water and packaged ice, so the Government uses the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* as a benchmark to assess the safety of bottled water. But nothing in the Regulations obliges manufacturers to observe the *Guidelines* during the production of bottled water and packaged ice.”

According to the labels on the bottled water we buy in Canada, it has no calories or sugar in it, but it might have nitrates, which are only safe in levels under 10. In Europe and many other parts of the world, bottled water labels must include the levels of nitrates. Here is an example of an [informative water label](#).

What can you do?

1. Drink tap water at home and at work.
2. Buy a reusable water bottle and take it with you.
3. Ask for tap water when you are out.
4. Learn more and advocate for Canada's water systems. Here are some places you can learn more...

<http://www.ecojustice.ca/clean-water>

<http://www.safewater.org/>

<http://www.worldwater.org/>