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May 5, 2011

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative  
20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 2700  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Ms. Kaput,

We would like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to make this submission and share with your committee the innovative project Collingwood has undertaken to engage our youth in water conservation and encourage them to drink the safe, clean tap water that we provide.

Collingwood is located in the heart of Ontario's finest four-season destination area. On the south shore of Georgian Bay, 150 kilometers north of Toronto, our community is home to 22,000 environmentally conscientious residents.

For over 100 years, Collingwood Utility Services has supplied the town's citizens and industries with safe and clean water. We pride ourselves on our innovation and have developed a reputation for going above and beyond minimum government regulations. We strive to exceed what is expected of us and act as a role model for other small communities.

This year Collingwood Utility Services has decided to submit to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative our Tap Water Promotion Program. This program is made up of two initiatives recently launched by Collingwood Utility Services. Firstly, all public elementary school students have been provided with a stainless steel water bottle to encourage drinking tap water. A Teacher's Resource Kit was also supplied to all schools to assist educators in teaching our students about the water they are consuming. Secondly, we have partnered with Blue W to create a network of businesses in our community that will allow patrons to fill their re-usable water bottles without the pressure to make a purchase. We feel this project is the perfect recipient for the Wege Small Cities Sustainability Best Practices Award because it is simplistic in nature, innovative, cost effective and can be duplicated in any community.

If selected as the recipient of the \$5,000.00 grant, Collingwood will use the funds to further our Tap Water Promotion Programs by providing a water bottle to all of our community's 2,200 high school students as well.

Thank you for taking the time to review the attached submission.

Yours,

Marcus Firman C.E.T.  
Manager Water Services  
Cc Mayor Cooper  
Ed Houghton



## **Collingwood's Tap Water Promotion Project**

The program we would like to submit for your consideration is our newly launched Tap Water Promotion Program ("TWPP"). This year we decided to create awareness about Collingwood's safe and clean drinking water by launching a two part program aimed at our community's youth. By creating an understanding of the drinking water we consume, we believe that respect and conservation for our most precious resource will surely follow.

During National Drinking Water Week, Collingwood Utility Services presented a total of 2,100 stainless steel water bottles to each elementary school student in Collingwood to promote drinking tap water. Water bottles were colour coordinated to match each school's team colour and embossed with their team logo. A Teacher's Resource Kit was prepared for each school with age appropriate water fact sheets and activities to assist teachers in making learning about drinking water fun and informative. Each child received a letter to take home to their guardians explaining the TWPP, and to further encourage everyone to make water wise decisions COLLUS staff visited several schools and presented the TWPP to the students.

The second phase of the TWPP was to launch the Blue W program. Blue W is a non-profit organization founded in 2009 whose aim is to provide Canadians free access to tap water by eliminating the invisible barriers associated with obtaining water while away from home. Municipal buildings and private businesses in Collingwood that participate are provided with a Blue W decal to display in their window. This decal indicates that the community is welcome to fill their re-usable water bottles in their establishment without pressure to make a purchase. The Blue W program has been very well received with over 40 businesses already registered.

We would like to advise the GLSLCI Selection Committee that Collingwood is not an anti-bottled water community and we do not place any bans on plastic water bottles in municipal buildings.

Collingwood strongly believes in education as a best practice and we have chosen to trust our citizens to make water wise conservation decisions based on the knowledge they have about our water system rather than acting as the enforcers of change.

### **A Triple Bottom Line Project**

It is impossible to put a price tag on the value of educating our children. Furthermore, it is hard to determine how much water will be conserved because of the knowledge that our students now possess. What we do know is that one water bottle costing a utility \$1.50 could save thousands in plastic non-reusable water bottles. By being a member of the Blue W network a business will spend less than \$0.0001 filling a re-usable water bottle and has the potential to gain a customer who may not have otherwise entered their establishment. Collingwood was fortunate enough to obtain sponsorship from local suppliers to purchase the water bottles for the students. The Blue W program cost the utility \$5000 to implement and maintain. Collingwood's TWPP has been an inexpensive way to change the behaviour of our community through education; living proof that knowledge is power!

As a small community, Collingwood is always trying to engage its citizen and create a society we can be proud to call home. The TWPP has taught our children that their water decisions have an impact beyond their own homes and schools. They now understand that Collingwood has a continuous water cycle and they need to protect Georgian Bay to ensure that their tap water remains safe and readily available. The Blue W program creates community minded business owners who are concerned about more than their bottom line. Business owners can see the social benefits of being involved in a program that requires very few of their resources and creates a lot of good advertising buzz.

It is our belief that conservation starts with respect and knowledge of the water system we are taking from. We want students to be engaged in the entire water cycle and teach them that they are

not just consumers; they must act as stewards for our most valuable resource. The Teacher's Resource Kit that we have created stresses the importance of keeping our lake clean so we can continue to provide safe, clean drinking water. The TWPP puts the power to make environmental change in the hands of our citizens.

There are no elements of the promotion that are enforced by the utility and both parts of the program have been created or chosen because they are simplistic in nature and could be as large or as small as the community demands. Our hope is that our schools, businesses and citizens lead the way and advise us on what they would like to see. Creating a municipality with knowledge and respect for our drinking water system truly is a best practice and one that can be adopted by all small communities.



*Presentation of water bottles to representatives from each elementary school. We were honoured to have John Stager, Chief Drinking Water Inspector & Assistant Deputy Minister of the Environment, on hand to help us celebrate the launch of our Tap Water Promotion Program.*



## ***For Immediate Release***

On Monday May 2, 2011 from 9:30am-10:15am Mayor Sandra Cooper will be joined by John Stager, Chief Drinking Water Inspector and Assistant Deputy Minister of the Environment, at the main entrance of the Blue Mountain Conference Center.

On behalf of the Board and staff of Collingwood Utility Service, Her Worship Mayor Cooper will launch Drinking Water Week (May 1-7) and formally introduce Collingwood as the newest Blue W community. Blue W is a non-profit organization that aims to provide Canadians free access to tap water by eliminating the invisible barriers often associated with obtaining water while away from home. Municipal buildings and private businesses in Collingwood that wish to participate will be provided with a Blue W decal to display in their window. This decal indicates that these businesses welcome the community to fill their re-usable water bottles in their establishment without pressure to make a purchase. Blue W's founder, Evan Pilkington, will also be in attendance and available for questions.

To further promote Drinking Water Week Collingwood Utility Services, along with the generous support of industry sponsors, will be presenting all public elementary school students with a stainless steel water bottle embossed with their school logo to encourage drinking Collingwood's safe, clean tap water. Student representatives from Admiral Collingwood, Cameron, Connaught, Mountain View and St. Mary's will be on hand Monday morning with their new water bottles to celebrate Drinking Water Week.

For further information please contact:

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