

Jeff Yurek
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th floor
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON
M7A 2J3

RE: Moratorium on commercial water permits & Nestle Water at Middlebrook

Dear Minister Yurek,

I am writing on behalf of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives to express our concern over the implications of the scheduled termination of the Provincial government's moratorium on issuing commercial water permits. The moratorium directly impacts our network in Centre Wellington, where the community and municipal council have expressed continued opposition to commercial water extraction for bottling purposes at the Middlebrook well.

On December 16, 2016 Ontario Regulation 463/16 established a moratorium on water bottling permits until January 1, 2019. The moratorium was extended in 2018 until Jan 1, 2020 to allow the ministry to further advance understanding of the water resources in the province. The resulting Water Supply Master Plan established that the township needs at least four new municipal wells to prevent water shortages for the growing population and Nestle at Middlebrook will interfere with municipal wells in the area.

KAIROS requests that the province take seriously its responsibility to protect municipal drinking water, and to consider the needs and wishes of the municipality concerning water permits. In the absence of a moratorium, private corporations will have the ability to extract groundwater that is needed to fulfil the needs of local municipalities. Fergus, Elora, and Salem are the main municipalities within Centre Wellington, and they are mandated in the "Places to Grow" legislation to double in population by 2041. With the absence of a commercial water permit moratorium, Nestle Water would be entitled to extract 1.6 million litres of groundwater everyday from its Middlebrook well, located west of Elora.

In addition to the contamination and depletion of groundwater resulting from private extraction of water, the environmental impacts of single-use plastic water bottles are serious concerns. KAIROS and its members are hopeful that the Ontario government will take a leadership role in ending the privatization of water.

I look forward to hearing what actions you plan to take in responding to this urgent situation.

Yours sincerely,

Amelia Berot-Burns

Ecological Justice Program Coordinator

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives