

## **Bottled water to keep flowing**

By DEREK PUDDICOMBE, Ottawa Sun

Bottled water will continue to flow at City Hall.

After a seven-month investigation into whether the city should ban bottled water at municipal facilities, staff have concluded that Ottawa should continue to permit bottled water.

The report was in response to an inquiry made last May by Somerset Coun. Diane Holmes, who wants bottled water outlawed in city buildings. The report findings will be tabled at next week's planning and environment committee meeting.

The Business Transformation Services office consulted with every city department during the probe of a possible ban on the sale of bottled water in plastic containers.

The city's public health department says there are "no potential public health risks in drinking bottled water" as long as it's stored properly.

### **CHEMICAL CONCERNS**

Holmes' inquiry arose after concerns about the possibility of chemicals leaching from the plastic bottles into the water. However, the report reassures that Health Canada suggests "there is no evidence of a human health hazard."

"I could have saved them a whole lot of effort and money on Day 1," said Gloucester-Southgate Diane Deans. "We shouldn't be studying the obvious."

Innes Coun. Rainer Bloess also said the study was a waste of time and money.

"Wasn't that the department (BTS) that was supposed to save us money and look for efficiencies," said Bloess.

The report says the city must store a certain amount of bottled water in case an emergency arises that doesn't allow residents to access city tap water.

The report recommends that bottled water remain an option in vending machines in city facilities because it's "viewed as a healthier choice than pop or juice."

At one point, the city did entertain the idea of bottling its own water. In March 2006, Capital Coun. Clive Doucet introduced the idea that was backed by council, who directed staff to look for a business partner that would help the city market Ottawa H2O. It has yet to find one.

The city does have water fountains installed at 597 of its 1033 facilities. The report says to install fountains at the remaining locations would cost about \$2 million and more than \$380,000 a year to operate.

The report also says that if council wanted to proceed with banning bottled water at municipal facilities it would have to consult with the public and require a more detailed study.

Currently, two Canadian cities -- St. Catharines and Charlottetown -- have banned bottled water from municipal buildings. Toronto is exploring the possibility of adding a 10cents tax on bottled water.