

# Environmentalists cheer as Nestle sells Canadian water

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To most environmentalists, Nestle is the ultimate symbol of big corporations which ravish the environment and thus we would like to see them gone.

Should they sell the plant at Ginnie, it seems likely some other company would continue the pumping, but even so, we share in the cheer at their departure.

Ironically, Ice River, who bought out Nestle in Canada, once bottled the water pumped from Ginnie Springs.

OSFR board member and former President Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson has participated in environmental activities in Canada against Nestle and was speaker at an international symposium [at the University of Guelph](#).

Read the entire article here at [this link to the Star](#).

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– *A river is like a life: once taken,  
it cannot be brought back* © Jim Tatum

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# Environmentalists cheer as Nestle sells Canadian water business



By [Josh Rubin](#) Business Reporter

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After years of criticism from environmental groups, Swiss-based consumer products giant Nestle is selling its Canadian bottled water business.

The company announced Thursday it's selling its Nestle Pure Life business in Canada to Shelburne-based Ice River Springs. Financial terms of the deal weren't revealed.

"In late 2019, we began the exploration of a potential sale of our Nestle Pure Life business in Canada, as we had determined that we are best positioned to focus on our iconic international brands of San Pellegrino, Perrier and Acqua Panna," said Nestle Canada president Jeff Hamilton in a news release.

The deal includes bottling plants in Puslinch, Ont., Hope, B.C., and a well in Erin, Ont. It also includes a controversial well

in Elora, Ont., which isn't yet in use. Nestle Pure Life water will continue to be sold in Canada, though it will be produced by Ice River.

"This is a victory for the people of Ontario. This is a response by Nestle to public pressure," said Robert Case, chair of Wellington Water Watchers, an advocacy group that had heavily criticized Nestle's purchase of the Middlebrook well in Elora.

In an email, Nestle Canada denied that the move was a result of public pressure.

"The decision was a business decision based on growth ambitions and prioritization on where we are best positioned for success," the company said in the email.

While Nestle's news release noted that Ice River is Canadian and family-owned, Case said that it's still one of the largest private-label water bottlers in North America.

"This isn't some mom and pop operation. This is a large company," Case said, adding that Wellington Water Watchers view the entire water bottling industry as inherently bad for the environment.

"I'd really like to see this industry stopped altogether. There's no reason for it, especially in Ontario," Case added.

Ice River co-owner Sandy Gott declined to comment but, in the news release, said the company produces "sustainable" bottled water.

"We will continue our commitment to sustainable bottled water, the circular economy and to hydrating Canadians," Gott said.

Ice River also operates a recycling division – BMP Recycling – that takes municipal blue box waste and turns it into food-grade plastic, including 100 per cent recycled bottles.

\On June 11, Nestle announced it was reshaping its global water business.

“The company will sharpen its focus on its iconic international brands, its leading premium mineral water brands, and invest in differentiated healthy hydration, such as functional water products,” the company said at the time.

In November, the Ontario government extended a moratorium on issuing new water bottling licences in the province. The moratorium, first introduced by the Liberal government of Kathleen Wynne in 2017, is set to expire on Oct. 1.

The moratorium came after Nestle purchased the Middlebrook, which the Township of Wellington Centre had intended to use for its municipal water supply.

Wellington Centre Mayor Kelly Linton said he was surprised by the announcement of the sale.

“This really came out of left field.”

Linton added that he was told by a Nestle representative that the Middlebrook well is part of the package being taken over by Ice River.

\“From my perspective, nothing has really changed. We still as a municipality need to ensure our long-term water supply. I’ve never been anti-Nestle. It’s strictly concern about making sure we have what we need,” said Linton.

Wellington Centre has a population of 30,000, but that's projected to reach 50,000 by 2041, Linton added.

Nestle and other water bottling companies pay Ontario \$503.71 per one million litres, about five cents for 100 litres of water.