

Dear Senator Cathy Osten, Representative Phillip Miller and
Planning and Development Committee Members:

My name is David Mann. I live in Bloomfield and I am an active member of the Inland Wetlands Commission and the Conservation Energy and Environment Committee. I hold a Master's Degree in City and Regional Planning from MIT. I am here to support substitute SB 422 and SB 328.

The Niagara fiasco is the result of 169 towns and the MDC struggling to survive fiscally without a broader view of the long term collective consequences. This is crisis management situation that leads to narrowly focused, quick-fix solutions, like granting tax abatements and huge water and sewer discounts, for a small number of jobs and some property taxes. This has passed for "economic development", although it is totally extractive, produces no value added and offers no economic multiplier effect. These deals were struck in back rooms without transparency and there was not even an obligation for public hearing on tax abatements.

Niagara's incentive is to extract the maximum amount of water possible from the surface and ground water sources -- to sell at maximum profit. Where other industrial users have a built-in incentive to practice conservation and other measures that improve efficiency and lower their water use and costs, Niagara's incentive is exactly the opposite. If our water is so attractive to them, let them pay, at minimum, the full price.

It's beyond me how you can expect people to conserve water then turn around and sell the savings. In the face of documented water shortages nationally and world-wide, emerging scientific evidence of global climate change, the MDC has courted Niagara to be their largest water customer. MDC has offered this deal with no protection in the event their capacity analysis from the last century is proven wrong. MDC's own "Water Supply Facts" states that only when our reservoirs reach 10% of capacity, will they act to shut the spigot to Niagara and other commercial uses. This may be too late to act!
No vision! No responsibility! No credibility!

SB 422 and SB 328 aim to increase transparency and reduce the discounts to Niagara, the cost of which will eventually pass on to consumers in all MDC towns. Water in the reservoir is money in the bank, if spent now it may not be available when a greater need comes along. These bills do not go far enough in my opinion. With the tap open now, they won't restrict other large water extractors from moving in and taking additional volumes of water limiting further limiting our choices for a better future. Nor do they restrict MDC from selling our water without public input. MDC executives have steadily repeated publically that they cannot make land use decisions or deny any user for access to water. I ask you, then who should?

We must prioritize the completion of the state safe water plan. It must contain adequate protections, should it become obvious that Niagara's long term consumption poses a

real threat to our water supply, wetlands, streams, rivers, aquifers and other water systems. If you think that this is overstated, please read the attached Ordinance form the town of Shapleigh, Maine whose water was ravaged by water extractors.

Mr. Jellison, MDC CEO, boldly stated before a meeting of almost 100 citizens two weeks ago, that he was not aware of any problems caused by private water bottling companies like Niagara or Nestles. All he had to do was Google it and learn about the calamities in Shapleigh, Newfield and Freyburg, Maine; Groveland, Florida, Aurora and Chaffee County, Colorado, Middletown, California and the list goes on and on. Aside from litigation, the common element in all these situations was secrecy, lack of public notice and transparency; and public officials went along with it! If these projects were defensible, they could have been made public.

If this is not enough for you to call a halt and seriously look into this situation, consider that Niagara will also securing spring water rights from private land owners in the area to supplement their MDC commitment. Once they start pumping, it is very difficult to stop them and extremely difficult to protect the health of our aquifers, streams, and ecosystems. It's that serious, and these bills do not go far enough to protect us if MDC is wrong.

Thank you.

David Mann
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