

Testimony regarding SB422
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Water – both as a natural resource and as a central component of smart and humane public policy – has become a topic of global conversation, from Flint to New Delhi.

It's discouraging that the members of the MDC in our state have not been keeping up with that conversation.

Like most residents of the MDC district towns, I oppose the Niagara Bottling plant being proposed for Bloomfield. And I oppose it for all the reasons that have been raised repeatedly in recent weeks, including:

the secretive, misleading way the negotiations were conducted; the pointless discounts and tax abatements for an enterprise that will have no meaningful effect on the economy of Bloomfield or the region; the sheer obtuseness of approving *any* plan for a plastic-bottled water plant, at a time when thoughtful, forward-looking communities are working hard to reduce those environmentally disastrous products or eliminate them altogether.

But equally importantly, I suggest that this Niagara episode, whatever its outcome, has pointed out that the mysterious, largely unaccountable, poorly administered -- and, as we are quickly learning -- startlingly arrogant entity known as the MDC is overdue for a total, independent, top-to-bottom reassessment.

In recent weeks, MDC members and staff have offered statements that are alternately embarrassing to themselves and insulting to their constituents. In the former category, CEO Scott Jellison admitted at a recent public meeting that he had "had no

understanding about the environmental concerns” pertaining to bottled water until the Niagara issue began to attract public notice.

As reported in the Courant, Jellison's admission “drew laughter from the audience.”

As well it might have, given that any middle school student today would be able to identify plastic water bottles as one of the most serious environmental scourges of our time, impacting landfills, inland waterways and, increasingly, our oceans.

In the near term, we can hope that the Niagara company, sensing the growing citizen disapproval of its Bloomfield plan, will decide to withdraw, as it did under similar circumstances last year in Ulster, N. Y.

That will leave us as citizens to concentrate on making sure that, as we go forward, the people and institutions responsible for our water supply begin to behave as informed planners and stewards, rather than, as Mr. Jellison and his colleagues currently seem all too willing to define themselves, mere merchants.

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