

FLOW Water bins the plastic bottle concept for eco alternative



By Brock Weir

When Nicholas Reichenbach decided to market the alkaline water flowing out of his family-owned spring in Bruce County, the last thing he wanted to do was create "just another plastic water bottle company."

He wanted to be a "disruptor to the \$15 billion North American bottled water industry" and through some creative innovation he is just that "bottling 100 per cent natural spring water in a product that is now 100 per cent recyclable and 70 per cent renewable" only now, he and FLOW Water are doing their disruption right here in Aurora.

FLOW Water opened its new 21,000 square foot Tetra Pak plant in Aurora last week. Described as the first brand-owned manufacturing facility, it will allow FLOW to oversee its entire production from the time the water comes out of the Bruce County spring, trucked to Aurora for packaging, and sent off to stores locally and across North America.

In addition to bringing the Tetra Pak technology back to Aurora, where the Swedish-founded company once had its North American base, the company now couples the Tetra Pak with a "Dream Cap," taking plastic out of the lid equation and replacing it with an alternative derived from sugar cane.

"We never really wanted to commercially develop the spring, mainly because we didn't want to build a plastic or glass bottling factory in our hometown," Mr. Reichenbach tells The Auroran. "It is a very rural area and there is no industry at all there. We didn't want to build a factory on top of this beautiful artesian condition. The second reason is when we did the math on it, even if we were to build a plant close to the artesian spring, the finished product shipping from a rural part of Ontario into the GTA is literally thousands of dollars every day. We started to scout for places that were closest to the spring to minimize our carbon footprint and sustainability and also satisfy the shipping zone GTA."

Their new plant on Industrial Parkway gets them into that all-important zone which, he says, is a key stepping stone in their vision for global expansion.

"One of the big mantras of FLOW is we are the only company in North America to put high quality, premium mineral spring water in a 70 per cent renewable package, the TetraPak and 100 per cent recyclable," he says. "The vision of Flow is to obviously reduce the amount of plastic that is going into the world, specifically with plastic bottled water, by offering an alternative to consumers in the premium water sector to have an environmentally friendlier alternative. So far it has been very well received. We have over 5,000 locations in North America, 4,500 in Canada coast to coast with all major grocery, drug chains and convenience stores carrying Flow."

Before the development of the Dream Cap, FLOW's product clocked in at 70 per cent renewable resources. With the Dream Cap now holding in the all-important contents, it now stands at 100 per cent. A considerable amount of time was spent bringing that particular component to North America, he says, with a goal of reaching that 100 per cent mark.

"That was part of my dream and that makes it a reality that we can actually offer a fully compostable product from renewable resources because we are really solving the greater global problem of grab-and-go beverages from non-renewable plastic or glass, and giving the consumer a truly amazing alternative that can be completely compostable and dissolved within months, not thousands

of years.?

It is also a timely innovation as communities across North America look at phasing out plastic bottles. Aurora Council, for instance, greenlit the recommendation from the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee to investigate the phasing out of plastic water bottles in municipal facilities last year with a possible eye of a wider ban in the future. Aurora is not alone. San Francisco was one of the first communities to field legislation banning water bottles and that, in part, sparked the idea for FLOW.

?When I saw their legislation come in, all I thought to myself was this is the first of every city in North America that is going to ban plastic water bottles and they are going to need an alternative ? and there was no alternative on the market,? says Mr. Reichenbach.

?Over the next five years, we want to build the company in North America and globally to be the next premium water company to compete against Fiji, Evian, Icelandic and Voss and the quality of Flow's water is 20 per cent higher mineral count than any other premium water on the market and it is from Canada too, which is great.

?We want to build our market share here in Canada as Canada's only premium water as well as bring this water into the North American market and globally to be Canada's own premium water ? and also to hold the sustainability flag up as well and say we're the only carbon neutral company with a positive impact onto the environment versus a negative.?

FLOW Water is available locally at Superstore, Sobey's, Metro and Nature's Emporium, among other locations.