



To: All Newly Elected Officials

RE: Drinking Water Source Protection Roles and Responsibilities

Dear council member,

Congratulations on your newly elected official role. We wanted to provide you with a brief introduction to the Drinking Water Source Protection Program under the Clean Water Act and highlight your legislated responsibilities under the associated Safe Drinking Water Act.

### Drinking Water Source Protection

In the **Thames-Sydenham & Region** our Municipal drinking water is drawn from surface water intakes and/or wells and wellfields located across the region. Drinking water sources can be easily contaminated, and long-term problems can develop that are costly or even impossible to correct. There have been many lessons learned and advances made in protecting municipal drinking water sources since the Walkerton Tragedy in 2000.

The Clean Water Act, 2006 is part of the multi-barrier approach to ensure clean, safe and sustainable drinking water for Ontarians, by protecting sources of municipal drinking water such as lakes, rivers and well water. Under this legislation, the Drinking Water Source Protection Program was established by the Government of Ontario. This resulted in the development of science-based assessment reports and local source protection plans by multi-stakeholder source protection committees, supported by source protection authorities. Municipalities play a large role in the implementation of the source protection plans and are a key partner.

In the Thames-Sydenham & Region we work together with the Source Protection Committee to coordinate the source protection plan policies for our watersheds.

### Responsibilities Under the Statutory Standard of Care – Safe Drinking Water Act

Source protection plans require municipalities to implement policies to protect the source water for their drinking water systems. The Safe Drinking Water Act includes a statutory standard of care (Section 19) for individuals with oversight responsibilities for municipal drinking water systems, which extend to municipal councillors. The statutory standard of care related to drinking water ensures that decision-makers are practicing due diligence to protect public health when making decisions about drinking water.

The Walkerton Clean Water Centre will be providing training for newly elected officials across Ontario. More information can be found at the following link: [Responsibilities Under the Statutory Standard of Care – Safe Drinking Water Act – CEU: 0.3 – Walkerton Clean Water Centre \(wcwc.ca\)](#)

Also, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks provides a good resource: Taking Care of Your Drinking Water: A Guide for Members of Municipal Councils. This document can be found at the following link: [Taking Care of Your Drinking Water: A Guide for Members of Municipal Councils | ontario.ca](#)

Councillors are encouraged to be informed, ask questions, and be vigilant in their important role to protect public health, as the standard of care provision under the Safe Drinking Water Act, came into force on December 31, 2012.

### Systems Not Covered Under the Clean Water Act

The Drinking Water Source Protection Program does not include private wells and/or private lake/river intakes. However, the owners of these private systems can take actions to protect their water sources. The Best Practices for Source Water Protection developed by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, provides guidance for systems not covered under Clean Water Act and can be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/document/best-practices-source-water-protection>

In conclusion, we are committed to working with our municipalities, other stakeholders, and the public to implement the source protection plans that serve to protect our drinking water while considering the other needs of our communities.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or for clarifications about the Drinking Water Source Protection Program. We are looking forward to working together to protect our existing and future drinking water sources.

Sincerely,



Julie Welker  
Source Protection Coordinator  
Thames-Sydenham and Region Drinking Water Source Protection

