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December 20, 1996

Michelle Swenarchuk
Executive Director
Canadian Environmental Law Association
517 College St., Ste. 401
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 4A2

Dear Ms. Swenarchuk:

Re: Region of York / Consumers Utilities
Long Term Water Supply Strategy

We wish to respond to your December 18, 1996 letter concerning our Long Term Water Supply Project. It was, as you requested, made available to and received by Regional Council members on December 19.

On the 19th, Regional Council adopted its preferred long term water supply solution. Included, for your information, are copies of reports that describe that solution.

When York Region was created by the Province some 25 years ago, it was acknowledged that the Region would have to look to solutions beyond its own municipal borders for major water and sanitary sewage servicing.

Municipal boundaries are drawn somewhat arbitrarily and certainly not with these major servicing considerations in mind. Very few, if any, municipalities live within the limits of their own local natural resources.

We hired the most knowledgeable consultant whom we would identify to evaluate our facilities and make recommendations regarding a water efficiency program. Their recommendations have been incorporated in our work.

Given the staged nature of our long term solution, however, it will be relatively easy to incorporate increased savings from conservation into our long term project if they do arise.

There is considerable debate over the amount of groundwater available in York Region. One of the two main factors that prompted the Region to embark upon a long term strategy was a groundwater assessment that concluded that there is insufficient water within the deep aquifer to service the long term needs of the urban municipalities currently sourced from groundwater.

All of our solutions contemplate the continued use of groundwater within the limitations of what the Province will allow.

Establishing a new surface water source of water supply is, without question, a significant project. The Class Environment Assessment for Municipal Water & Wastewater projects identifies this type of project as being appropriate to be conducted under the Class EA as a Schedule C project. Following the provisions of the Class EA then was a logical starting point.

The Class EA does contemplate that a proponent may determine that a preferred solution may be such that an individual Environmental Assessment is more appropriate. This decision would be reached at the end of Phase II when the preferred solution was known. This is the point where we are right now and having identified our Preferred Solution we feel that the Class Environmental Assessment continues to be the appropriate mechanism under which to proceed.

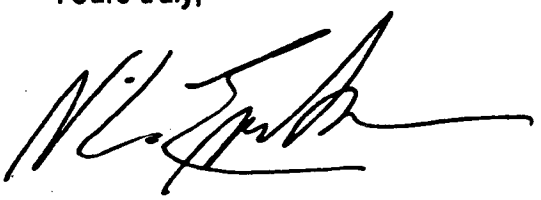
We will be filing full documentation of our process to date with the Environmental Assessment Branch of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and seeking their concurrence that we have successfully completed Phase II of the Class Environmental Assessment process as it pertains to Master Planning for a water project.

Our public consultation process has been extensive, and we feel, exceeds considerably the requirements of the Class Environmental Assessment. We did not host Public Open Houses outside York Region as we felt that the public interest to attend such Open Houses would not be sufficiently high as to justify them. We did, however, advertise the York Region Open Houses extensively, and offered to provide transportation to those outside the Region who wished to attend an Open House within York. The feedback that we received from the Public who attended the Open Houses was, in the main, very favourable.

We believe that the level of detail with respect to the information accumulated and presented to date was sufficient to enable us to reach a defendable decision with respect to our long term supply. We definitely considered the major concerns that would be triggered by an intra-basin diversion proposal, though these concerns were not the only reason for not favouring that particular solution.

We believe that the foregoing addresses the points you have raised but if we can provide further clarification please contact us. We thank you for your submission.

Yours truly,



N. L. Embree, P. Eng.
Joint Project Manager - York Region

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