



Media Backgrounder

April 21, 2003

Managing Ontario's Water Resources With Permits To Take Water *Moratorium and Amendments to Ontario Regulation 285*

The *Ontario Water Resources Act* (OWRA) provides for the administration and supervision of ground and surface water in Ontario. The OWRA and its regulations authorize a Director of the Ministry of the Environment to issue, amend, refuse or cancel Permits To Take Water (PTTW) for most types of ground and surface water takings for quantities over 50,000 litres/day. Exceptions include fire fighting, watering of livestock and domestic use.

Of the various types of water takings permitted by the Ministry, the five largest purposes are industrial (including hydro power generation), dams and reservoirs, wildlife conservation, municipal water supply and agricultural. Regulation of water takings was first introduced in 1961 and was most recently amended in O.Reg. 285/99, the *Water Taking and Transfer Regulation*, in 1999.

Proposed changes

The Ministry of the Environment has posted a draft regulation on the Environmental Bill of Rights web site for public consultation. The draft regulation lays out proposed amendments to O.Reg. 285/99 that will:

- require new permit applicants to notify municipalities, conservation authorities, and adjacent landowners about proposed water takings;
- require reporting of water use by permit holders; and
- define potential impacts that will be considered when reviewing permit applications.

The Ministry will also consult on the development of a fee structure to recover costs associated with the PTTW program.

These amendments respond to calls by the Association of Municipalities of

Ontario, the Environmental Commissioner's Office, the Environmental Review Tribunal, and individual conservation authorities to update and improve specific policies and practices within the Permit To Take Water program.

Reporting of water use by permit holders will provide information needed for decisions under the Ontario Low Water Response program, watershed-based water budgets and the fulfillment of Ontario's commitments under the Great Lakes Charter Annex, 2001.

Moratorium Regulation

The government has posted a final regulation under the *Ontario Water Resources Act* to prohibit the issuance of new Permits To Take Water for the following purposes:

- beverage manufacturing, including the manufacturing or production of bottled water or water in other containers;
- fruit or vegetable canning or pickling;
- ready-mix concrete manufacturing; and
- the manufacturing or production of products that contain some or all of the water that is taken.

The prohibition will apply within the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area (as defined in the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act*) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Area (as defined in the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act*) to applications for new Permits To Take Water received between March 1, 2003 and August 31, 2003.

The prohibition will not apply to:

- persons with a valid Permit To Take Water;
- renewals of existing permits from the same location and for the same purpose;
- permits for agricultural purposes; and
- permits for uses that do not manufacture or produce a product that contains some or all of the water that is taken.

Both the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine are provincially recognized environmental planning areas.

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