



Preventing Tragedy - Watershed Plans and Source Protection

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Would Source Protection Have Helped to Prevent the Walkerton Tragedy?

- Bacterial contaminants (E. coli 0157:H7 and Campylobacter) entered the Walkerton municipal water system through several failures
- All of the parties and experts stressed the importance of a multi-barrier defence



Source Protection is First

- “keeping contaminants out of drinking water sources is an efficient way of keeping them out of drinking water”
- Real source protection means a plan

We're not the first

- Other jurisdictions already do source protection
- Examples include New York, New Brunswick, U.S. Groundwater Protection Rule, Europe

Do we have source protection in Ontario?

- The Conservation Authorities and Municipalities are much too limited with their existing tools
- Private landowners (such as farmers, industry, developers) are not adequately involved in source protection
- There is not yet any overall provincial policy favouring source protection

What has to change in Ontario?

- Source Protection Plans
- On a watershed basis
- Integral to a “systematic land use planning approach that protects drinking water sources”
- Developed by local authorities led by conservation authorities

How to do Source Protection

- All decisions, local and provincial to be consistent with the watershed's source protection plan
- Examples include water taking permits, land use development applications, farm plans (nutrient management strategies), biosolids certificates of approval
- Must include quality and quantity

Without Source Protection, We're Not Protected

- “In a multiple-barrier system for providing safe drinking water, the selection and protection of reliable, high-quality drinking water sources is the first barrier”
- The rest of the barriers (treatment, distribution system, monitoring programs, responses to adverse conditions) all rely on the first

It's time to act

- Justice O'Connor gave us the road map
- Conservation authorities, municipalities, NGO's and First Nations have the expertise
- The potential for tragedy is all-too-present if we limit our attention to the “pipes and pumps” end of our water system

Source Protection Framework must be implemented

- The advisory committee appointed by the province in November, 2003 met for one to two days per week for four months, supported by a technical working group of staff of several ministries and staff of other agencies including municipalities and conservation authorities

The framework moves the yardstick

- Supported by all of the members of the advisory committee, including myself, the framework builds on Mr. Justice O'Connor's 22 recommendations dealing with source protection and provides specific guidance as to the content of needed legislation, scope of source protection plans, roles and responsibilities and principles

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