



May 24, 2005

Premier Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg, Rm 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier:

We are writing because our organizations are deeply concerned about what we fear is a shift in the government's priority on the implementation of Justice Dennis O'Connor's recommendations to ensure safe drinking water.

As we mark the fifth anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy, the apparent absence of clear movement on source water protection legislation or appropriate funding in the budget announced on May 11/05, sends a strong and troubling signal that the government's commitment to protecting Ontario's drinking water appears to have significantly diminished.

The Phase 2 Report of the Walkerton Inquiry was released nearly three years ago. Of the 93 recommendations, Justice O'Connor devoted 22 to source protection; indeed, the very first recommendation in the report states: *Drinking water sources should be protected by developing watershed-based source protection plans. Source protection plans should be required for all watersheds in Ontario.*

Your government publicly committed to implementing all of the Walkerton Inquiry recommendations. We applauded the establishment of the Technical Experts Committee and the Source Protection Implementation Committee; many of us participated in these committees' deliberations. These two committees reported over six months ago and we believe provided the government with the information necessary to move forward with legislation that would establish the framework necessary to begin protecting Ontario's water sources.

It is now time to act. We believe that your government must reaffirm its commitment to protect Ontario's drinking water sources. Specifically we seek your public commitment to introduce, pass, and proclaim the Drinking Water Source Protection Act in the early stages of the next session of the Legislature, based on a clear timetable that will see the legislation in place before the end of 2005. We understand that this legislation has been drafted and we ask that you release this draft for public review and comment over the summer. Finally, the government must commit the financial resources necessary to ensure that source water protection plans are developed and implemented.

The people of Ontario elected your government based, in part, on its promise to implement Justice O'Connor's recommendations and in large measure because of its commitment to improved health care. Source water protection is the first barrier of the multi-barrier approach recommended by Justice O'Connor. Until this critical first barrier is put in place drinking water supplies remain vulnerable and the health of Ontario residents remains at risk.

There must never be another Walkerton tragedy.

Our organizations have worked constructively with the government in the past on this and other files. We hope to continue that collaboration and would be pleased to meet with you and the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of the Environment, to determine how we might move forward quickly to ensure that the Drinking Water Source Protection Act is enacted into law in 2005.

A statement of your intent prior to the official opening of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre on May 31, 2005 would send a strong signal of your government's continuing commitment to protect Ontario's drinking water.

Respectfully,



Paul Muldoon, Executive Director & Counsel
The Canadian Environmental Law Association



Peter Krause, Chair
Conservation Ontario



Tod Wright, Senior Provincial Director –
Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada



Michael Bradstreet, Ontario Regional Vice
President, Nature Conservancy of Canada



Rosemary K. MacLennan, Chair
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cc Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of the Environment
David Ramsay, Minister of Natural Resources