

PROTECT YOUR WATER

How to better safeguard your private well or surface water intake

If you are one of the nearly three million Ontario residents who get their drinking water from a private well or water intake, your water may be less protected than your neighbours'.

You can help change this by exercising your right to request equal protections for the current and future quality of your drinking water.

Source Water Protection in Ontario

Safe drinking water starts with preventing harm to the rivers, lakes and groundwater resources that we rely on. This is called source water protection.

Within Ontario's source protection regions, municipalities have strong powers that allow them to identify, monitor and manage activities that could pose a risk to their source water quality in the years or even decades to come.

Despite promises to do so, the province has not extended these protections to residents who rely on private wells or surface water intakes. This means that your water may be at a higher risk for being contaminated or depleted before it reaches you.

Although the provincial government hasn't extended equal water protection to all Ontarians, you have the right to ask your municipality to be included in an existing source protection plan.

Ontarians should call on their municipal governments to take this action and close the gap in safety between people with municipal and private water service in your community.

- Landfills
- Fuel storage tanks
- Road salt and airport de-icing
- Household contaminants



- Septic systems
- Sewage lagoons or treatment systems
- Sewer overflow into waterways



- Mining
- Industrial chemicals
- Hazardous waste storage
- Industrial discharges
- Water taking



- Pesticides
- Livestock
- Manure application



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Right to Know

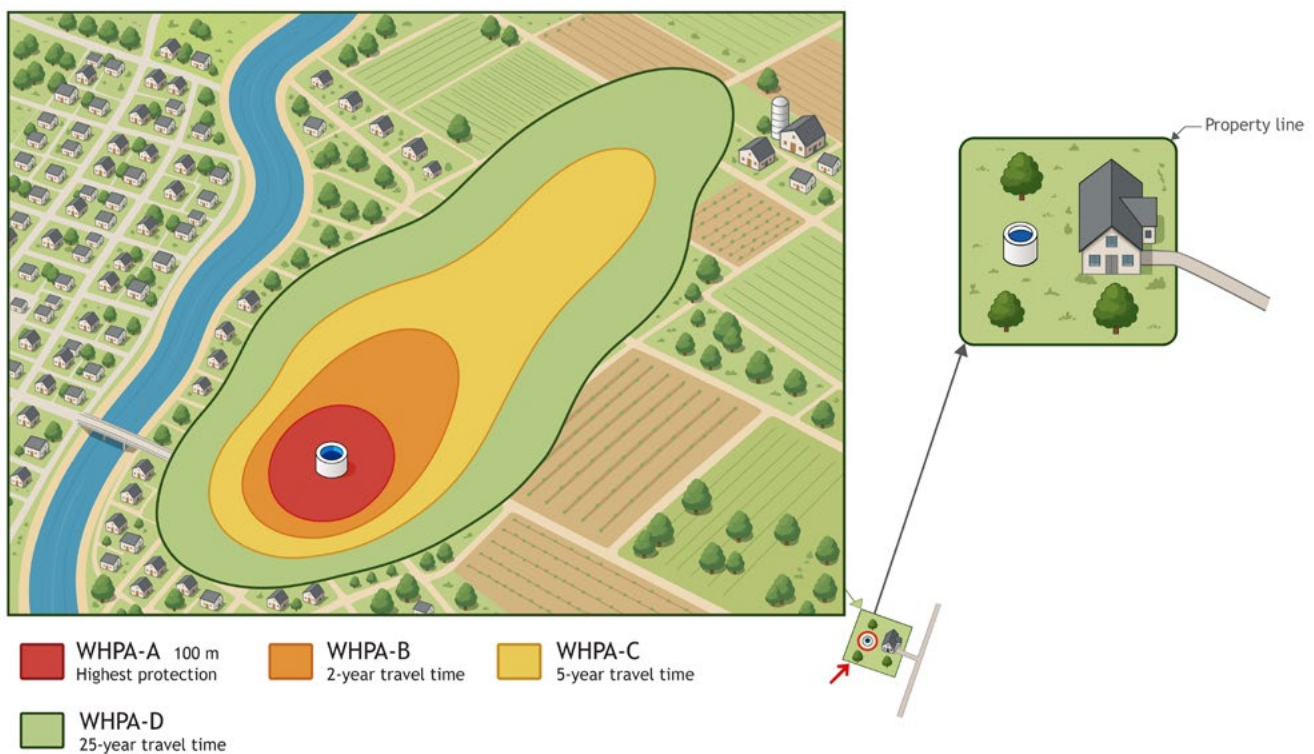
When a new water system is added to the source protection plan, the surface water intake or well head protection areas are studied and mapped. This process will give you detailed information about where your water flows from and how vulnerable each area is, and reveal what past, current and future activities could put the quality or quantity of your water at risk.

PROTECTED MUNICIPAL WELL

Source protection policies prevent contamination that could reach a protected well even decades down the line

PRIVATE WELL

In most cases, your ability to protect private well water starts at the property line



Prevention

Joining a source protection plan will protect you from the approval of future developments or activities that could put your drinking water at risk.

Certain activities, like treating sewage or building a garbage dump, that would have previously been allowed to move forward could now be banned from happening in your source protection zone.

Mitigation

When you join a source protection plan, policies focused on preventing harm to the water system can now be enforced in your source protection zone—even on private land.

Examples of policies that could be applied to activities in a well or surface water intake protection zone include:

- Transparent testing and reporting requirements for polluters in the WHPA or IPZ
- Mandatory inspections for septic systems or fuel tanks that could pose a threat to the source water
- Restrictions on where and when pesticides, manure or raw sewage can be applied to the ground

Unlocking these powers provides significantly more control over how the actions of others impact your water, long before it makes its way to your tap.

How do I exercise my right to equal source water protection?

Step 1

Is my water system eligible?

In order to be eligible to be added into a source protection plan, a private drinking water system must meet the following criteria:

- ☐ The well or surface water intake must be within the boundaries of an existing source protection area.
- ☐ The well or surface water intake must be within the boundaries of a single, upper-tier or lower-tier municipality.
- ☐ The well or surface water intake must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - Serve 6 or more households;
 - Be in proximity to at least 6 other wells or surface water intakes;
 - Serve a designated facility (e.g. a school, childcare centre, elder care facility or medical facility).

Detailed information about the location of source protection areas can be found on the Conservation Ontario website or in your local source protection plan.

Step 2

Ask your municipality to act

In most cases, the local municipality is responsible for seeking the addition of a new drinking water system to the source protection plan. This is done by passing a motion to amend the “terms of reference” for the existing plan.

Below are some steps that you can take to encourage your representatives to protect your right to clean drinking water:

- If you live in a multi-tier municipality, review the local source protection plan to find out which municipal level is in charge of adding new drinking water systems;
- Develop a list of reasons for why the municipality should add your drinking water system to the source protection plan. This could include:
 - Information about your water quality at the tap; or
 - Information about activities in your area that may be a threat to drinking water.
- Ask your council to pass a motion to include your drinking water system in the source protection plan. This could be done:
 - In meetings with individual members of council;
 - In a presentation made to the entire council.

Step 3

Monitor the approval process

After making the case for adding your drinking water system into the source protection plan, a number of actions need to be taken by your municipality, the source protection authorities and the province.

Take Action and Learn More

All Ontarians deserve safe drinking water and a meaningful say in how their source water is protected, regardless of where they live.

For more information about how joining a source protection plan could help protect your private well or surface water intake and what you can do to call for change, visit CELA's source protection webpage (English only) or contact us at info@cela.ca.

