

Halton water to quench Guelph's thirst for development?

By Donna Danielli

Municipal boundaries mean little to the flow of water, but when water-taking encroaches on those boundaries the question of to whom the water belongs needs to be addressed. That's the question being asked by the Towns of Milton and Puslinch, and the Regions of Halton and Guelph-Eramosa in the face of the City of Guelph's current proposal to expand its water taking processes at Arkell Springs by the construction of two additional wells. The three existing wells currently have a capacity of 13.6 cubic meters (approximately 13,600 litres) per minute and the two additional wells would increase this capacity to 20 cubic metres (approximately 20,000) per minute.

"That's an enormous amount of water and it needs to be scrutinized very carefully," says Halton Regional Councillor Barry Lee, who first alerted both the Town of Milton and the Region of Halton to the potential conflict. Councillor Lee, who is also a member of the Grand River Conservation Authority Board of Directors, has expressed concerns over both the expanded catchment area proposed for Arkell Springs and the lack of public input into the project to date. He is concerned that wells in Eden Mills, Rockwood, Puslinch and North Halton may be

for development and the question that has to be asked is: What will this mean for the future?"

Very little in terms of negative impact, argues Peter Busatto, City of Guelph Waterworks Manager. "There's a vast amount of water there, more than we're proposing to take," he explains. "That water will be there to provide people with an adequate water supply now, and to meet future needs." Mr. Busatto also points out that legally, as part of its licensing requirements, the City of Guelph is prohibited from negatively impacting someone's well. "If it is established that we have done so, we are compelled to fix that at our own expense."

Public input is crucial to a proposal such as this, something that Councillor Lee claims has been missing from the process thus far. "Guelph has not been very forthcoming," says Mr. Lee, who expresses concerns about the application's Class B Environmental Assessment, something he feels does not require enough public input for a proposal of this magnitude. Again, Peter Busatto counters by saying that while a Class B Environmental Assessment only requires them to contact the immediate neighbours of the well, "we've actually gone beyond that quite a bit." The city's water supply strategy

was sent to neighbouring municipalities upon its completion in August, allowing for a 30-day period for comments. Extensions to this deadline were requested by the municipalities to allow for more time to study the proposal and to organize public information centres. Puslinch held a public meet-

ing on the proposal on November 7 and a public meeting is set for Brookville Hall in North Halton on November 17 from 7 to 9 p.m. City of Guelph and Region of Halton staff will be on hand at that meeting to answer questions about the potential impact the increased water-taking may have on private

well supplies. As well, anyone with questions or concerns is encouraged to contact Peter Busatto directly at 519-837-5627.

"We want to hear from people and we're prepared to go to any open houses to ensure that people are informed," promises Busatto.

seriously impacted by the removal of 20,000 litres per minute at the Arkell site. "This is not a small undertaking," says Mr. Lee. "The catchment area has greatly increased. Guelph has a huge appetite

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