

# 'Big pipe' from Georgian Bay may be headed this way

By **ROB KELLY**  
*The Champion*

There may be a 'big pipe' solution to north Halton's water woes, but not the one from Lake Ontario.

Wednesday Dave Russell, a vice-president with TransCanada Pipelines, told a Halton regional committee his company wants to build a \$500 million water pipeline from Georgian Bay south to York Region and west to Kitchener-Waterloo, a distance of roughly 115 miles.

The company would own the pipeline, and sell water to municipal governments along its length. The cost would be higher than the current water price — probably \$4 a gallon as opposed to \$1 a gallon, Mr. Russell estimated. But that hasn't dampened interest in York or Kitchener-Waterloo, apparently.

Particularly in York, the fastest-growing jurisdiction in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), there is "a sense of urgency," Mr. Russell said. "The timing is sort of urgent. They need to have some solutions."

The problem in many areas of Ontario is that they are growing beyond the ability of the underground water supply to support them. Unable to tap into nearby large lakes or rivers, these communities sink large municipal wells to provide water.

In Milton, which is entirely dependent on groundwater, there is a growth freeze. In Halton Hills, it has taken a decade to finalize plans to tap into new groundwater sources for relatively modest expansion. Kitchener-Waterloo depends on groundwater too.

In Milton, plans are being scripted which point to building a \$100 million pipeline — the so-called 'big pipe' — from Lake Ontario to the town. The \$4 million Halton Urban Structure Review (HUSR) currently underway will re-draw the municipal map in Oakville and Milton based on massive projected growth in the wake of such a pipe.

While TransCanada Pipelines maintains a low public profile, the Calgary based company is a large and active player on the international energy scene, primarily in gas supply. The firm has committed \$3 billion to expansion in Canada over the last three years, Mr. Russell noted.

TransCanada Pipelines is prepared to "design, build, finance and operate" the \$500 million pipe system, Mr. Russell said, under some sort of government price regulation, similar to the way utilities function.

Mr. Russell is approaching various municipalities along the proposed pipeline route to determine if they are willing to explore the matter further, or even support the concept in principle.

He plans on using that feedback when he pitches the idea to decision-makers in the provincial government.

If all goes well, the project could be underway by the mid 1990s, he predicted. "It's not impossible for the province to fast-track it. What I don't know is if they will."

Rash Mohammed, Halton's planning director, said the concept is "an alternative that should be explored."

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