

Clean Water Act passes second reading

BY CRYSTAL KOTOW

Six months after its introduction in the House of Commons, Bill 43 – otherwise known as the Clean Water Act – recently passed second reading.

Introduced Dec. 5, 2005, the legislation is intended to protect water at its source to ensure safe drinking water now and in the future. The Act forms part of the provincial government's plan to implement all recommendations made by Justice Dennis O'Connor in his report on the Walkerton Inquiry.

The government called for a public inquiry after seven people died and more than 2,300 Walkerton area residents became ill in May 2003 as a direct result of drinking contaminated water.

According to Environment Minister Laurel Broten, prevention is key.

"We want to prevent what may go wrong by creating barriers of protection," she said during a news conference June 29. "If communities are going to be able to make the right decisions, they must be based on the best available science."

Broten said conservation authorities and municipalities are currently using advanced research and technology for watershed planning and mapping. So far \$67.5 million has been granted to communities across Ontario, over half of the proposed total of \$120 million.

Once it's known where water is traveling, additional funding will be provided to enable construction of comprehensive maps of water resources. With the maps, authorities will be able to see where water is flowing which will allow accurate planning for the prevention of contaminants flowing from one community's water into another. It will also give authorities an idea of how much water is available and its quality.

Though the cost may seem high to some, Broten said it is more cost effective to prevent the problem than to deal with critical issues that occur after the fact.

"Some studies say it's been 40 times more expensive for communities around the world to fix their water issues, than it would have been to put preventative measures in place," she said. "It's going to take a number of years before we'll understand just how much implementation will cost in a variety of places."

According to Broten, full implementation across Ontario is scheduled to begin five years from now. Until then conservation authorities will be working to create expropriation plans. Broten guaranteed that landowners whose land needed to be expropriated would be protected under the Expropriation Act which ensures landowners receive prior notice and adequate compensation.

The Essex Region Conservation Authority has been participating in background studies for the past year and is currently starting to prepare reports. According to Stan Taylor, coordinator of source water protection at ERCA, the Clean Water Act lays a good foundation for protecting and improving water.

"This will be successful for two reasons," he said. "First, it's based on good, sound science. That's why we're putting so much emphasis on these technical studies. Second, the proposed Clean Water Act requires representatives from municipalities, the agriculture community, the health community, among others, to work on the plan and to really guide the preparation of the plan. It's a very community based process. It's not done in a closet somewhere. It's done in a very transparent and very participatory way."

Taylor said the scientific studies are time consuming but, with respect to water quality, all time and money invested into the Clean Water Act is worthwhile.

"The conservation authorities facilitate the process," he said. "It's a lot of work pulling all the technical information together but it's important. It's going to be useful for so many reasons and protecting our water resources is crucial."

Ontario grain and oilseed committee appoints new chair

At a recent meeting of the Ontario Grain and Oilseed Safety Net Committee, Leo Guilbeault, director with the Ontario Soybean Growers and farmer from Essex County, was appointed to replace outgoing chairman, Peter Tuinema.

"Peter has done an outstanding job representing grain and oilseed farmers as the inaugural chair of our committee," said Guilbeault. "I know I have big shoes to fill."

But Tuinema isn't going far. He will head up the organization's federal lobby committee. "Recent funding announcements and ad hoc payments have left us with more questions than answers," he explains. "We have a lot of work to do."

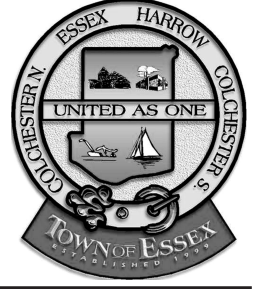
Tuinema is confident that Guilbeault has the energy and experience required to meet the challenges facing the farm community. "Leo's leadership, and the support of volunteers from all of our member organizations, will enable our committee to continue to execute a professional, coordinated lobbying and communications

strategy."

Guilbeault's commitment to the grain and oilseed sector is evident. "We have developed a fair and responsible solution – the Risk Management program," said Guilbeault. "And we continue to engage producers and build public support through our Farmers Feed Cities! campaign. The problem isn't going away, and neither are we."

Established in 2005 in response to growing concern over instability in the sector, the Ontario Grain and Oilseed Safety Net Committee represents the interest of its seven member organizations, including: Ontario Soybean Growers, Ontario Corn Producers' Association, Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board, Ontario Canola Growers' Association, Ontario Coloured Bean Growers' Association, Ontario White Bean Producers' Marketing Board and the Seed Corn Growers of Ontario. Collectively, they represent more than 29,000 grain and oilseed farmers across the province.

TOWN OF ESSEX 2005 FINANCIAL REPORT



CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF ESSEX
Performance Measurements Report (Unaudited)
Year ended December 31, 2005, with comparative figures for 2004

	2005 Actual	2004 Actual		2005 Actual	2004 Actual
Local Government			Drinking Water (cont'd.)		
Operating costs as a % of total municipal operating costs	11.20%	11.20%	Operating costs/megalitre treated - treatment	\$421.14	\$412.03
Fire Services			Operating costs/per km of distribution pipe - distribution	\$1,339.44	\$2,041.72
Operating costs/\$1,000 of assessment	\$0.50	\$0.38	Operating costs/megalitre treated - treatment & distribution	\$655.42	\$739.99
Police Services			Solid Waste Management		
Operating costs/person	\$185.73	\$168.71	Cost/household - collection	\$48.31	\$52.12
Violent crime rate/1,000 persons	5.85	4.73	Cost/household - disposal	\$56.53	\$60.14
Property crime rate/1,000 persons	25.67	25.89	No. of complaints/year/1,000 households concerning collection	2.84	3.26
Total crime rate/1,000 persons	34.69	34.06	Land-Use Planning		
Number of youths charged/1,000 youths	2.63	8.86	% of new lots, blocks & units approved and located within settlement areas	33.3%	78.4%
Roads			% of land designated for agricultural purposes which was preserved in the current year	100.00%	100.00%
Operating costs/lane km - paved roads	\$215.30	\$197.64	% of land designated for agricultural purposes which was preserved relative to Jan. 1, 2000	100.00%	100.00%
Operating costs/lane km - unpaved roads	\$1,681.66	\$1,487.33	No. of hectares redesignated from agricultural in the current year	0.00	2.00
Operating costs/lane km - winter maintenance	\$827.38	\$443.23	No. of hectares redesignated from agricultural since Jan. 1, 2000	2.00	2.00
% of lane kms rated good to very good - paved roads (as per Roads Needs Study)	78.00%	100.00%	Parks & Recreation*		
% of winter events where response met or exceeded locally determined standards	100.00%	100.00%	Operating costs for parks/person	\$10.63	\$10.68
Wastewater (Sewage)			Operating costs for recreation programs/person	\$7.07	\$7.39
Operating costs/km of wastewater main - collection	\$287.24	\$208.09	Operating costs for recreation facilities/person	\$83.86	\$78.57
Operating costs/megalitre treated - treatment & disposal	\$241.15	\$294.88	Operating costs for parks, recreation programs and recreation facilities/person	\$101.55	\$96.64
Operating costs for collection, treatment & disposal of wastewater/megalitre treated	\$324.63	\$372.08	Total participant hours for recreation programs/1,000 persons	5,040.04	4,767.24
Number of wastewater main backups/100 kms of wastewater main/year	3.67	14.15	Hectares of open space	43	43
% of wastewater that by-passed treatment	0.00%	0.00%	Hectares of open space/1,000 persons	2.17	2.14
Storm Water			Total kilometres of trails	2	2
Operating costs for urban storm water management/km of drainage system	\$484.83	\$398.95	Total kilometres of trails/1,000 persons	0.10	0.10
Drinking Water			Square metres of recreation facility space	11,525	10,778
Weighted number of days/year when boil water advisory in effect	0.0208	0.0039	Square metres of recreation facility space/1,000 persons	581.13	536.62
Number of water main breaks/100 kms of distribution pipe/year	5.01	2.79			