

DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION

ACT FOR CLEAN WATER



Source Protection Report

By Janet Stavinga, Chair

The Open Houses held in June across our watersheds were a great success. Working with our municipal partners, we provided residents with up-to-date information on the municipal water supplies in our communities. We also gathered citizens' thoughts on our draft Terms of Reference, an important document outlining our workplan and budget from now until the completion of the Source Protection Plans in 2012.

On July 3 in Westport, our SPC Committee considered and discussed all the comments received during the public consultation period. They revised the draft Terms of Reference to incorporate specific concerns. This new document, the **proposed Terms of Reference**, will be posted July 18 for public comment (**comment deadline is September 5**). The document and comments will then be forwarded to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) for approval.

During our recent public review, two major issues were raised repeatedly, specifically related to funding.

Firstly, municipalities continue to be concerned that they will have to cover the costs to implement Source Protection Plans. To date, the province is committed to pay 100% of the costs to develop the Assessment Reports and Source Protection Plans. Implementation costs are another matter entirely, as we cannot even estimate these costs until we have determined how many local drinking water risks there are, and what types of policies are required to address these issues. Much of this work will not begin until 2010. Our Committee and our partner Conservation Authorities understand these concerns and continue to raise this issue with the MOE at every opportunity.

The second key issue is whether individuals will be required to pay for new protection measures required on their land. The *Clean Water Act* specifically precludes compensation, but it has entrenched in law a financial assistance program called the *Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program*. We continue to push MOE to ensure sufficient funds are available through this program beyond 2012 to provide financial assistance to persons whose activities or properties are affected by the Act. Our Committee will also examine other financial instruments that may be of assistance.

Another piece of the Clean Water picture arrived in late June with the posting of the **proposed Assessment Report Regulation** describing the details required in the preparation of our technical assessment reports. The posting is on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry and **comments are due August 4**. View the documents at www.ebr.gov.on.ca (registry number 010-3873).

Our **next SPC meeting** is on **August 7 in Plevna**. This meeting will be interesting as we hear from the Province as to whether or not uranium exploration is a significant threat to our municipal drinking water systems. We meet at 1 pm in the Plevna Community Hall. **I invite you to attend.**

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