

Sierra Club of Canada
The Georgian Bay Association
Friends of the Earth
Great Lakes United
Canadian Federation of University Women Ontario Council
POLIS Project on Ecological Governance
Lake Ontario Waterkeeper

December 18, 2006

The Honourable Laurel C. Broten
Minister of the Environment
12th Floor, 135 St. Clair Avenue West
Toronto, Ontario
M4V 1P5

Dear Minister Broten,

Re. Proposed Extension of York Durham Sewer System

We are writing this letter in reference to York Region's proposal to extend the York Durham Sewer System (YDSS) to Holland Landing and Sharon in the Town of East Gwillimbury, which is currently undergoing Class EA review.


Currently, Holland Landing and Sharon are dependent on production wells provided by York Region. These wells supply groundwater from the Lake Simcoe watershed, which is connected to Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. This well water, once used, is currently discharged through septic systems back into the Lake Simcoe watershed. The extension of the York Durham Sewer System to Holland Landing and Sharon would result in the diversion of this well water from the Lake Simcoe-Georgian Bay-Lake Huron watershed to the Lake Ontario watershed. The proposal would essentially re-engineer the natural hydrological flows within the region.

The undersigned are extremely concerned by the potential ecological impacts of this proposal, including the consequences of declining Great Lakes levels and depleting groundwater supplies. It is our belief that once these costs are considered, the current plans become both environmentally unsound and economically unfeasible. We assert that there is a reasonable alternative and a more sustainable option would be to use the water within the Lake Simcoe watershed for water supply and through a combination of water conservation, wastewater treatment processes, and land use management, enable return flow of adequate quality to Lake Simcoe.


We are also concerned that York Region's plans will undermine the goals of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (the "Agreement"). The current plans constitute an intra-basin transfer that would require York Region to establish that its proposal is an exception to the prohibition against diversions and intra-basin transfers in the Agreement. We applaud the position that Ontario took to act as a leader in strengthening the Agreement to prevent bulk water withdrawals out of the Basin. However, the approval of York Region's plans without subjecting it to review under the Agreement will surely raise into question the sincerity of Ontario's ongoing role as a leader in this process.


We urge you to strongly consider the ecological consequences that would arise if the proposal were approved, particularly given the fact that more sustainable alternatives exist.


Yours truly,

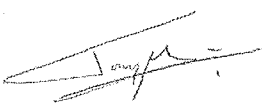

Timothy Morris
Water Campaigner
Sierra Club of Canada

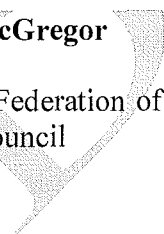

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