



May 1, 2025

Honourable Minister Sylvia Jones
Honourable Minister Todd J. McCarthy
Ministry of Health / Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

Dear Hon. Sylvia Jones / Hon. Todd J. McCarthy

A recent report from Ontario's Auditor General highlighted significant weaknesses in the provincial government's ability to protect the health of the nearly 20 per cent of Ontarians who rely on drinking water from non-municipal drinking water systems.

As we near the 25th anniversary of the deadly drinking water tragedy in Walkerton, Ont., **we are calling on the government to reaffirm Ontario's commitment to safe drinking water for all by implementing the Auditor General's 17 recommendations in a meaningful, timely and transparent way.**

The Walkerton tragedy and the subsequent public inquiry by Justice Dennis O'Connor served as a catalyst for rebuilding Ontario's drinking water regulatory system on a foundation of vigilance and prevention.

The findings from the recent performance audit reveal that these guiding principles are not being realized for Ontario's non-municipal drinking water systems:

- **Less than half** of public health units (PHUs) met inspection frequency requirements
- **One-third** of systems under the purview of the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) had not been inspected in **more than five years**
- A sample of PHU records showed that more than **50 per cent** of non-municipal system owners did not complete water testing requirements

This erosion of vigilance means that the drinking water of the nearly three-million Ontarians who rely on non-municipal systems is not being adequately monitored, putting their health at risk.

In addition to these findings, the Auditor General cited concerns about transparency, rigor and timeliness in how MECP and MoH approach regulatory modernization. Of note was MECP's incomplete feasibility assessment regarding protecting the source water of non-municipal systems - a critically important protection that is only afforded to Ontarians who rely on drinking water systems owned and operated by municipalities.

The Auditor General also raised concerns about the quality and accessibility of supports for owners of private wells or water intakes. Over **one-third** of private water samples were found to contain bacteria. **Sixty-seven per cent** of these positive test results involved *E.coli* or fecal contamination - the same contaminant that caused the deadly drinking water crisis in Walkerton.

We are calling on the Ontario government to publicly develop and commit to an action plan by the end of 2025 that outlines specific timelines and processes for how it will fully implement the Auditor General's 17 recommendations.

Canadian Environmental Law Association

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The government must ensure that the lessons of Walkerton are not forgotten and that we never take clean drinking water for granted in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Theresa McClenaghan
Executive Director,
Canadian Environmental Law Association

[SIGNATURE]

CC/ Hon. Lisa M. Thompson (Minister of Rural Affairs), Dr. Kieran Moore (Chief Medical Officer of Health)

Co-Signatories:

50by30Niagara
Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara
Climate Action Newmarket Aurora
Engaging Residents of Oro-Medonte
Folkes Construction Inc.
Georgian Bay Association
Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet (GASP)
Liveable Richmond Hill
Ontario Municipal Water Association
Oro-Medonte Property Owner's Association
Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) Coalition
STOPTHE413NOW
The Ontario Headwaters Institute
West Oro Ratepayers' Association (WORA)

AWARE Simcoe
Carden Field Naturalists
Concerned Citizens of Ramara
Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations
Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour
Grand River Environmental Network
GreenUP
Ontario Rivers Alliance
Rescue Lake Simcoe
Simcoe County KAIROS
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York Simcoe Nature Club

