



Ontario Approves Mattagami Region Source Protection Plan

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*Ontario approved the Mattagami Region Source Protection Plan under the Clean Water Act, 2006 on April 10, 2014. The Plan will take effect on October 1, 2014. This is the third source protection plan (SPP) to receive provincial approval, with 16 others currently under consideration. **Municipalities and companies should take note of this development to help prepare for their potential responsibilities and opportunities under Ontario's evolving source protection planning regime.***

Key Considerations for Municipalities and Companies

Municipalities are the primary implementers and enforcers of SPPs. Those with SPP responsibilities will need to prepare for this new role by employing and training risk management officers to oversee plan implementation. Alternatively, they may hire a body approved under the *Clean Water Act, 2006* to provide the necessary services.

Companies that operate in a region covered by an SPP will need to determine whether they are affected by SPP policies and, if so, how. For example, if a company is conducting activities that impact an SPP-identified vulnerable area, such as an intake protection zone or a wellhead protection area, it will need to find out whether those activities will be permitted to continue. If yes, it may need to negotiate a risk management plan with the responsible municipality within the stipulated time frame to avoid having one potentially imposed upon it.

Context

In the 14 years since contamination overwhelmed the municipal drinking water system in Walkerton, Ontario has come a long way in implementing the source protection recommendations of the Walkerton Inquiry. The provincial *Clean Water Act, 2006* and associated regulations seek to protect municipal drinking water sources – lakes, rivers, aquifers – from contamination. The Act requires local communities, through Source Protection Committees (SPCs), to assess threats to their drinking water and to establish SPPs to mitigate those threats. SPPs must be science-based, include public consultation and be approved by the Ontario Minister of the Environment.

To date, 19 SPCs have been developed and submitted SPPs to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). The Mattagami Region SPP is the third to be approved, preceded by the Lakehead SPP in January 2013 and the Niagara Peninsula SPP in December 2013.

Key Provisions of the Mattagami Region SPP

The Mattagami Region SPP covers over 11,000 square kilometres, more than 48,000 residents and four municipalities – the City of Timmins, the Town of Iroquois Falls, the Township of Black River-Matheson and the Township of Matachewan. Of these, only Timmins has a municipal drinking water system, which draws from the Mattagami River and supplies approximately 90 per cent of the region.

Under the SPP, Timmins will

- ◆ establish risk management plans for the storage of pesticides, fuels and manure
- ◆ ensure municipal sewage equipment has appropriate back-up power systems
- ◆ update its road salt management plan
- ◆ pre-screen land use planning and building permit applications to prohibit the future storage of large quantities of organic solvents, and
- ◆ in partnership with the Mattagami Region Conservation Authority, conduct an education and outreach program to advise fuel distributors, private fuel outlets and property owners of what to do in case of a spill.

Coming Soon

As noted above, 16 other SPPs are being reviewed by the MOE. All are scheduled to be revised and resubmitted by their respective SPCs by mid-2014 at the latest. Therefore, the MOE will likely announce a number of approved SPPs in the coming months. Over the next year, much of Ontario's new source water protection regime should fall into place.

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