

Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McNamara regarding Testing of Private Water Wells

In the 2023 Auditor General's Value-for-Money Audit of Public Health Ontario (PHO) released in December 2023, recommendation number 5 states that PHO, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health (MOH), are to update and implement a laboratory modernization plan within 12 months to streamline the laboratory's operations.

https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en23/AR_publichealth_en23.pdf

This stemmed from a 2017 proposal by PHO, collaboratively with the MOH at the request of the Deputy Minister to close six of the 11 public health laboratory sites (Hamilton, Kingston, Orillia, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins) and gradually discontinue private drinking water testing. The justification:

- Mitigating rising costs of maintaining facilities
- Establishing a more efficient operating model that reduces the rerouting of samples to other PHO laboratory sites.

Lakeshore, like many communities in Ontario have residents which get their water from private wells. If this proposal were to be implemented it would shift the responsibility and cost for testing onto these residents. This may lead to the reduction of residents testing their water for pathogens and put them at undo risk of illness. We must not forget the events of Walkerton and the seriousness these decisions have and their implications. Private well owners do not have the protection provided to others under the Safe Drinking Water Act 2002. Further, this water testing data can be provided to the regional health units to help determine if a greater health threat is present in the region and act expeditiously. Also, in these times we should not be shouldering residents with the added cost of testing. This is and should always remain a service provided by the Province as it's the Provinces responsibility to provide healthcare for its residents.

Therefore, Council supports the responsibility and cost of testing private water wells remain with the Province of Ontario; and

Direct Administration to send a copy of Council's resolution on this matter to Premier Doug Ford, the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Sylvia Jones, Ontario Minister of Health, Anthony Leardi MPP – Essex, Trevor Jones MPP – Chatham-Kent - Leamington, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and all Ontario municipalities.