

Climate Action Newmarket Aurora Comment on Proposed Amendments to the Clean Water Act, 2006

ERO 025-1060 Accelerating and improving protections for Ontario's drinking water sources

While efficiency is important, the proposed amendments risk weakening Ontario's commitment to protecting drinking water at its source — a priority that is increasingly critical as climate change intensifies droughts, alters rainfall patterns, and threatens freshwater system resilience. Transferring approval powers from the Minister to local authorities, and introducing automatic approvals after 120 days, could allow new developments to proceed without full scientific review or public consultation, particularly in areas where water systems are already stressed.

Limiting the types of policies that address significant drinking water threats, and restricting oversight of “existing” activities, undermines the preventive intent of the Act. Small or cumulative threats could degrade water quality over time, reducing access to safe, clean water for communities and ecosystems.

Faster approvals may also increase pressure on aquifers and surface water systems, affecting their ability to naturally absorb and store carbon. Degraded or overused sources compromise both drinking water security and the climate resilience of natural systems. As such, Climate Action Newmarket Aurora opposes these amendments they are currently written.

Recommendation

Ontario should:

- increase technical and financial support for drinking water protection agencies;
- maintain science-driven oversight; and
- ensure transparent reporting.

Protecting source water is fundamental to public health, environmental sustainability, and climate adaptation and must remain the priority over administrative speed.