

December 2, 2025

Submitted online and via email to source.protection@ontario.ca

Public Input Coordinator – Source Protection
Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Conservation and Source Protection Branch
300 Water Street North tower, 5th floor
Peterborough, ON K9J 3C7

RE: Regulatory changes (ERO 025-1104) and amendments to the Clean Water Act, 2006 (ERO 025-1060) to accelerate and improve protections for Ontario’s drinking water sources:

The City of Guelph (the “City” or “Guelph”) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the amendments to the *Clean Water Act, 2006* (CWA) which received Royal Assent on November 3, 2025 (ERO 025-1060), as well as on the proposed amendments to regulations under the CWA (ERO 025-1104) to streamline the process of source protection plan amendments.

We recognize the intent of the CWA amendments and proposed regulations to reduce duplication and accelerate amendments to source protection plans, particularly in response to new or modified municipal wells and intakes. With that, we want to note that Guelph is a groundwater-based community which relies on municipal wells, with the entire city located within a Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) for both water quality and quantity. As such, we are deeply committed to the principles of source water protection, which are foundational to the CWA and essential to safeguarding public health, our drinking water supplies and the environment, and want to emphasize the importance of maintaining and enhancing protections for vulnerable aquifers.

Overall, the City recommends that all legislative and regulatory change continue to prioritize:

- Comprehensive technical assessments of threats to groundwater quality and quantity.
- Timely updates to assessment reports which reflect changes in land use, climate impacts, and cumulative impacts on aquifers.
- Strong policy frameworks that mitigate or remove risks from both existing and future drinking water threat activities within wellhead protection areas.

City Hall
1 Carden St
Guelph, ON
Canada
N1H 3A1

T 519-822-1260
TTY 519-826-9771

guelph.ca

Below you will find the City's additional comments on the CWA amendments, and the proposed regulatory amendments.

Amendments to Regulations under the Clean Water Act, 2006 (ERO 025-1104):

Amendments to the O. Reg. 287/07 (General Regulation) under the Clean Water Act:

The City supports the proposed change allowing Source Protection Authorities (SPAs) to approve Source Protection Plan (SPP) minor amendments, recognizing that the technical rigor of Assessment Reports remains under Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) approval. This maintains provincial oversight of scientific and technical components while enabling more efficient local decision-making. Municipalities must be meaningfully involved in the SPA and/or Source Protection Committee (SPC) process when amendments impact their drinking water systems. Additionally, in light of the proposed amalgamation of regional conservation authorities (ERO 025-1257), the Ministry will need to provide certainty as to the composition of SPAs as approval bodies.

A further definition of "slight change" with respect to SPP amendments for new wells or intakes is necessary to provide the SPAs and Risk Management Officials with the necessary information for decision making and authority to implement this change.

The City agrees with streamlining the consultation process into a single phase and removing pre-consultation requirements, as long as municipalities are still given adequate opportunity to review and comment on proposed amendments before public consultation. Currently, municipalities will still be required to endorse the policies. This reinforces the need for early and meaningful engagement to ensure municipal concerns are addressed proactively without a formal appeals process.

The City is concerned that the Prescribed Instrument policy tool may be limited in its ability to adequately address water quantity drinking water threats at a local scale (i.e., Well Head Protection Area - Quantity). This limitation is particularly concerning, where proactive management is critical to sustaining municipal drinking water supplies where approval authority is outside the abilities of the Risk Management Official or municipality. We recommend that the Ministry ensure source protection plan policies retain the ability to influence the Permit to Take Water (PTTW) process and other water quantity-related approvals such as EASRs. This will help safeguard long-term water availability in groundwater based systems and ability to support new housing growth.

New Minister's regulation under the Clean Water Act:

The City has no comments on the proposed new regulation as outlined in the ERO posting.

The City recommends further review of the CWA and associated regulations to modernize the framework presented, specifically regarding requirements for Certificates of Service.

Changes to O. Reg. 205/18 (Municipal Residential Drinking Water Systems in Source Protection Areas):

The City supports the proposed amendment to allow the operation of new municipal water sources prior to the completion of the associated SPP amendments. This flexibility is essential to ensure timely access to new drinking water supplies for growing municipalities, especially given the protections provided by the existing processes for the approval of drinking water works permits and municipal drinking water licences.

We recommend that the regulation clearly require submission of all relevant technical work to both the SPA and the SDWA Director when the notice is issued. This ensures transparency, supports informed decision-making, and maintains alignment between drinking water approvals and source protection planning.

Comments on the Amendments to the Clean Water Act, 2006 (ERO 025-1060):

Recognizing that the CWA amendments are now in force, having received Royal Assent on November 3, 2025, the City would like to make some general comments regarding the implementation of these changes and any future CWA amendments:

Consultation and Engagement

The City of Guelph is disappointed by the lack of meaningful consultation on the CWA amendments, with the consultation period only open for 11 days prior to Bill 56 passing through legislature. The accelerated legislative process limited the ability of municipalities, SPAs and SPCs to provide informed feedback on changes that directly affect local water governance and protection.

Future legislative changes should include robust engagement with municipalities, SPAs and SPCs to ensure local expertise and concerns are considered. This is especially critical in communities like Guelph, where source water protection is integral to long-term sustainability for housing growth.

Funding and Capacity Support

Additional funding should be provided to SPAs to support the increased workload associated with plan approvals, coordination, drinking water threat assessments, modelling updates and potentially more frequent SPC meetings. Without adequate resources, the effectiveness of these changes may be compromised.

Appeal Mechanism

Clarification is needed regarding the appeal process for decisions made by SPAs under the new framework. Municipalities must retain the ability to challenge decisions that may impact local water resources or planning.

Transparency and Accountability

We support the requirement for SPAs to post approved amendments and notices online. Notice should also be provided to affected municipalities. Further guidance should ensure that supporting documentation is accessible and that decision-making processes remain transparent.

Prescribed Instrument Oversight

Changes to prescribed instrument policies must be carefully implemented to ensure continued oversight and adaptive management of existing and future threats to drinking water. The CWA's emphasis on preventative measures must remain central to any policy revisions and allow municipal input to these approvals to ensure the ongoing protection of water resources. This includes the ability to tailor these approvals based on local impacts.

Closure:

We appreciate this opportunity to provide input on this proposal, and look forward to working together with the Ministry to support the implementation of the streamlined SPP amendment framework. Should you have any questions about the feedback provided or require additional details please do not hesitate to contact the City at intergovernmental.relations@guelph.ca.

Sincerely,

Nectar Tampacopoulos, General Manager, Environmental Services
Infrastructure, Development, and Environment
City of Guelph

T 519-822-1260 extension (3599)

TTY 519-826-9771

E nectar.tampacopoulos@guelph.ca