

Comment on Proposed Amendments to the Clean Water Act, 2006

ERO 025-1104 Regulatory changes for accelerating and improving protections for Ontario's drinking water sources

The proposed regulatory changes aim to streamline source protection plan amendments and municipal drinking water approvals. While efficiency is important, these changes raise serious concerns for environmental protection, climate resilience, and public transparency.

Allowing local authorities to approve plan amendments with less Ministerial oversight, and enabling municipal water systems to supply new or altered sources before amendments are finalized, could permit development in vulnerable areas without comprehensive scientific review. This increases the risk of contamination, overuse, and cumulative impacts on freshwater systems.

From a climate perspective, degraded or overdrawn water systems lose their ability to store and absorb carbon, worsening local greenhouse gas impacts and reducing the natural resilience of ecosystems to droughts and extreme weather events. Accelerated approvals without adequate review may also intensify stress on water supplies already affected by climate change.

Reducing consultation requirements and limiting oversight can undermine transparency and public trust, including Indigenous and community participation in decision-making. Clear, accountable, and science-driven safeguards are essential to ensure water security for people, ecosystems, and climate adaptation. As such, I am opposed to the regulatory changes as they are currently written.

Recommendations

Ontario should

- maintain rigorous scientific assessment
- keep transparent oversight, and precautionary protections while exploring ways to improve efficiency,

This would ensure that source water remains safe, resilient, and climate-adaptive.