

Office of the
County Warden



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January 31, 2024

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

RE: Rural and Small Urban Municipalities – Affordability of Water and Wastewater Systems

Dear Premier Ford,

Please be advised that at the Regular Council Meeting on January 31, 2024, The County of Renfrew passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) (Section 1.6.6.2) states that municipal sewage services and municipal water services are the preferred form of servicing for settlement areas to support protection of the environment and minimize potential risks to human health and safety and that intensification and redevelopment within these settlement areas should be promoted; and

WHEREAS the PPS (Section 2.2.1 (f)) states that planning authorities shall protect, improve, or restore the quality and quantity of water by implementing the necessary restrictions on development and site alternation to protect all drinking supplies and designated vulnerable areas, and protect, improve, or restore vulnerable surface and ground water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive groundwater features, and their hydrologic functions; and

WHEREAS the PPS (Sections 2.2.1(h) and (i)) states that there is consideration of environmental lake capacity as well as stormwater management practices; and

WHEREAS the Ministry of the Environment, Protection and Conservation (MECP) Procedural Guideline B-1-5 Policy 2 provision states that water quality which presently does not meet the Provincial Water Quality Objectives shall not be further degraded and all practical measures shall be undertaken to upgrade the water quality to the Objectives; and

WHEREAS in 2014 the Township of Whitewater Region authorized Jp2gConsultants Inc. to undertake a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (EA) for the purpose of evaluating viable options to upgrade the 1979 Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant. This plant did not meet guidelines for effluent flow into Muskrat Lake and Cobden Wetland being highly sensitive, at-capacity, inland lake, and Provincial Significant Wetland (PSW) and acknowledged as one of

the most eutrophic in the province. The plant had ongoing seasonal overflow events, and was operating at maximum capacity; and

WHEREAS in 2018 the Council of the Township of Whitewater Region approved the construction of a new parallel mechanical system that would meet all provincial environmental and regulatory requirements including accommodating future growth. Federal and provincial contributions only covered 50% of the final construction costs, as there was no ability to renegotiate with federal and provincial partners once real costs were known. As a result, the balance of costs (\$6M) was debentured over 30 years at interest rates that are slightly punitive to rural and small urban municipalities; and

WHEREAS in 2019 the Council of the Township of Whitewater Region conducted a Water and Wastewater Rate Study that demonstrated the need for rate increases of over 100% to fund the new wastewater treatment plant construction debenture and the significantly increased operating costs for a parallel mechanical system. Rural and small urban municipalities experience very limited growth as federal and provincial policies heavily support growth in urban centers. As there are no other sources of available operational funding, rural and small urban municipalities are expected to fund the construction and operation of these state-of-the-art systems from existing property owners and nominal forecasted growth; and

WHEREAS in 2023 the Township of Whitewater Region combined water and wastewater rates have risen to almost \$3,000/year for its five hundred and eleven (511) users and are among the highest in the County of Renfrew and across the Province of Ontario. There are similarly high user rates in the Township of Madawaska Valley as a result of Provincial regulations and a small number of users. Other examples of rapidly increasing rates include the Towns of Deep River, Renfrew, Arnprior, Laurentian Hills, and Petawawa, and the Townships of Bonnechere Valley, Laurentian Valley and Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards, where significant upgrades in short periods of time are making rates unaffordable even with an increased number of users.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Council of the County of Renfrew:

Advocate to the provincial and federal levels of government to make them aware that rural and small urban water and wastewater systems are financially unsustainable; and Advocate to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to examine if the unaffordability of water and wastewater system operational costs is systemic provincially and nationally.

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be circulated to The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; the Honourable Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure (Ontario); the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities (Canada); the Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (Ontario), Cheryl Gallant, MP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, John Yakabuski, MPP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; AMO; ROMA; FCM; and all Municipalities in Ontario.

If you have any questions regarding the above resolution, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Emon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Emon, Warden

County of Renfrew

warden@countyofrenfrew.on.ca

cc: Honourable Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure (Ontario)
Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities (Canada)
Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Honourable Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (Ontario), Cheryl Gallant, MP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke
John Yakabuski, MPP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
AMO; ROMA; FCM; and all Municipalities in Ontario.