

Green Plan Steering Committee
Position Paper—Principles for the City of Guelph’s Water Supply Master Plan

January 18, 2005

The Water Supply Master Planning process is supported by the goals and objectives from the Green Plan itself.

Green Plan references¹:

“Protect, preserve and conserve water to ensure a sustainable resource.” (Goal 4, pg. 29)

“Protect and enhance water quality.” (Goal 5, pg. 29)

- *“Develop short and long term water management strategies.” (Objective 13, pg. 31)*

Based on the Green Plan, the Green Plan Steering Committee (GPSC) has prepared the following principles to guide its participation in the planning process.

Green Plan Principles for Long-term Water Management

1. GPSC does not support a pipeline as an option to meet future water needs, for the following reasons:
 - High capital costs, treatment and operating costs
 - Energy costs to power the pumps
 - Long-term damage to agricultural resources along the route
 - Negative environmental impacts to the natural heritage systems along the route related to crossing of streams, rivers, woods, wetlands, etc.
 - Potential local and regional ecological damage associated with dewatering (effects on groundwater) during construction and post construction period
 - Violation of the environmental principle of living within the resource capacity of our local sub watershed
 - Future uncertainties with respect to the Great Lakes water supply including cumulative impacts of increased pipeline and other water takings by Canada and the USA on Great Lakes ecosystems
 - Recent political discussions re inability of Canadian and provincial governments to reach an agreement to protect lakes from massive proposed and existing water takings
 - Potential for climate change or other unforeseen natural event to significantly reduce lake levels

¹ In 1994, Council approved the Goals and Objectives of the Green Plan, some of which are presented here. The Community Thoughts from the Green Plan, while not approved by council, provide insight into residents’ concerns for the environment of the city and the region of which it is a part.

Green Plan reference:

- *“Many residents felt that Guelph should be responsible for its own water supply, and should avoid piping water in from distant sources.” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)*

2. We should continue to depend on our regional aquifers for our drinking water supply. We should be living within the ecological resources that the aquifer provides. This principle that we will rely on our local regional aquifers should be tied to the growth policies of the city within its official plan. Most importantly, the City must establish, implement and enforce a well head protection program both within its Official Plan and its zoning bylaws. This well head protection plan must include the protection of ground and surface water resources such as wetlands, cold and warm water streams, and rivers from the negative impacts of over pumping of municipal wells. Any expansion of the current system that involves new or increased pumping of existing wells must consider how the drawdown of surface contamination will increase the threats to the quality of our water supply.

Green Plan references:

- *“Ensure an adequate water supply through the protection of surface waters, wetlands, recharge areas and well heads.” (Objective 10, pg. 29)*
- *“Protect the natural environment for its inherent value.” (Objective 14, pg. 31)*
- *“Participants in the community involvement program (CIP) expressed considerable concern for maintaining the high quality of water available in the City, and ensuring that the water leaving the City is as clean as when it enters the system. Residents expressed a preference for using ground water instead of surface water, and wanted to protect the City’s groundwater resources from possible contamination..” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)*
- *“The community recognizes the need to promote water conservation to reduce consumption and to maintain resources for future use. Suggested strategies include...and protection of recharge areas and possible future well sites.” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)*

3. The other limiting factor to growth is the assimilative capacity of the Speed River to accept sewage. Therefore, no matter where our future supplies of water are located, we must consider the end of pipe impacts on the Speed River both locally and to downstream communities. GPSC believes that the 50-year Water Supply Master Plan must be directly linked to the Long-Term Wastewater Master Plan in order to ensure that we will remain healthy within our ecological resources.

Green Plan references:

“Ensure an adequate water supply through the protection of surface waters, wetlands, recharge areas and well heads.” (Objective 10, pg. 29)

“Meet or exceed water quality criteria.” (Objective 15, pg. 31)

“Participants in the community involvement program (CIP) expressed considerable concern for...ensuring that the water leaving the City is as clean as when it enters the system.” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)

4. Guelph must establish, implement and fund a full-scale water conservation program for inside and outside water use. Conservation is less costly and more environmentally responsible because it reduces the need for expanded water takings. All water use within the city should be metered. This includes all current private water systems within the city. Because water is basis of all life, it has value and therefore, as a non-renewable shared community resource, all users both public and private should pay for their water and sewage use. Private wells not only reduce the community water supply, but can also contribute unknowingly to the to the drawdown of contaminants into regional aquifers.

For social equity, every family should have its basic survival water needs met at an affordable and sustainable price based on per person or per household use (X cubic meters per month). The minimum price should be based on the real or true costs of supplying treating and assimilating water/sewage. Any use above the established minimum (such as lawn watering, pool filling etc.) should have an elevated price in keeping in order to encourage water conservation.

With respect to water rates for industrial, commercial and institutional users the minimum water charges should be based on the real or true costs of supplying, treating and assimilating water/sewage.

Green Plan references:

- *“Encourage the wise management of water resources through conservation measures.” (Objective 11, pg. 30)*
- *“The community recognizes the need to promote water conservation to reduce consumption and to maintain resources for future use. Suggested strategies include education, full cost pricing, water conservation devices in homes, higher efficiency in industry...” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)*

5. The long-term water supply master plan should not consider increased supplies for non-essential water use such as lawn watering. The Outside Water Use Program restrictions must remain. The city should develop xeriscaping and top soil bylaw requirements as part of the proposed Urban Design Guidelines for any new infill, Brownfield, commercial, residential, institutional and industrial development. Use of native plant species should be encouraged as part of xeriscaping.

Green Plan references:

- *“Encourage the wise management of water resources through conservation measures.” (Objective 11, pg. 30)*
- *“The community recognizes the need to promote water conservation to reduce consumption and to maintain resources for future use.” (Community Thoughts, pg. 26)*