

**Ministry of the Environment
and Climate Change**

**Ministère de l'Environnement et de
l'Action en matière de changement
climatique**



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Mr. Ian Wilcox
General Manager
Upper Thames River Source Protection Authority
1424 Clarke Road
London, Ontario
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Mr. Robert Bedggood
Chair, Thames-Sydenham and Region Source Protection Committee
RR#2, 20278 Fairview Road
Thorndale, Ontario
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Dear Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Bedggood,

It is a pleasure to inform you that the review of the source protection plans for the Upper Thames River, St. Clair Region and Lower Thames Valley source protection areas, developed under the Clean Water Act, 2006, has been completed. Pursuant to section 29 of the Clean Water Act, I approve the plans for the Upper Thames River, St. Clair Region and Lower Thames Valley source protection areas.

Following today's approval of the plans, in order to allow time to prepare for implementation, the Upper Thames River, St. Clair Region and Lower Thames Valley source protection plans will take effect on December 31, 2015. Please ensure that this date is clearly stated in the plans.

Your community is to be commended on reaching this important milestone. This is an example of the local, inclusive, community-based approach envisioned by the Clean Water Act. The Province has been pleased to support the assessment and development of the source protection plans for the areas within the Thames-Sydenham and Region source protection region with an investment of \$17.91 million since 2004. An additional \$1.88 million was provided within the region under the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program for voluntary measures taken to protect the municipal drinking water sources.

I appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Thames-Sydenham and Region source protection committee, the three source protection authorities, and all stakeholders to

assess and develop plans to protect drinking water sources in your community. Thank you for all your hard work, leadership and commitment.

Ontario recognizes that collaboration with partners is critical to reducing the presence of algal blooms in the Great Lakes. We look forward to continuing to work together with you and other partners to reduce algal blooms in Lake Erie. The Province, along with many partners involved in source water protection, is currently taking a number of actions. These actions include:

- Ontario re-introduced a strengthened proposed Great Lakes Protection Act on February 18, 2015. If passed, the proposed Act would require the government to establish a target to assist in the reduction of algal blooms and give the Province new tools to protect the Great Lakes and the waterways that flow into them. The proposed Act is currently moving through the legislative process.
- On June 13, 2015, the Premier of Ontario signed the Western Basin of Lake Erie Collaborative Agreement with the Governors of Ohio and Michigan. This agreement commits to work to achieve a 40 percent phosphorus load reduction in Lake Erie's western basin by 2025, with an aspirational interim goal of a 20 percent reduction by 2020. In addition, Ontario is working with Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New York on a Joint Action Plan to reduce phosphorus loadings to the western and central basins through the Great Lakes Commission's Lake Erie Nutrients Targets Working Group.

Ontario is committed to taking action on reducing phosphorus loading through binational efforts with partners in Canada and the U.S. under Annex 4 of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, as well as our commitments under Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy and the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health, 2014. Ontario has participated in, and supports the proposed binational phosphorus loading reduction target of 40 percent for Lake Erie to minimize the incidence of harmful algal blooms in the western basin, reduce hypoxia (low oxygen) in the central basin, and address near shore algal blooms in the vicinity of several priority watersheds in the western and central basins, including the Thames River. To support this effort, the Province in collaboration with partners, including source protection committees, will be developing an Action Plan to identify opportunities to reduce nutrient loading.

- Ontario has a 12-point plan outlining how we are working with our partners to fight algal blooms in the Great Lakes by: reducing nutrient loadings; protecting sources of drinking water; providing scientific, monitoring and technical expertise; providing funding to improve water quality; applying relevant regulatory tools as well as water quality standards and guidelines; and collaborating with Medical Officers of Health and others. The Plan is posted at: <http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/blue-green-algae>.

The Province has made a commitment to work with partners to prevent and respond to algal blooms in the Great Lakes under the 12-point plan. This includes recognizing the importance of source protection plans in achieving this goal.

The source protection plan submitted to the ministry includes policies that address blue-green algae in the western basin of Lake Erie through research and education. As the lead authority, the Upper Thames River conservation authority will play an important role working with municipalities, the Province and other bodies to identify and evaluate sources of nutrients that contribute to the algae blooms. The phosphorus and nitrate monitoring and research program will help inform future plan updates and regional actions in the western basin. The education and outreach strategy to promote best management practices to reduce phosphorus loadings into Lake Erie will complement the monitoring program.

As part of the approval of the plan, under section 36 of the Clean Water Act, an order must also be given that governs the review of the plan. Pursuant to clauses 36 (1) (c) and (d), and as an initial step in the development of detailed requirements to govern the plans' review, the lead source protection authority for the region shall prepare and submit a workplan to the ministry. The workplan shall propose the detailed steps for the review of the plans, including which portions of the plans are to be reviewed, the timeframes for each step of the review, the consultation that would be undertaken as part of the review, and rationale for each step. A summary of how the workplan was developed shall also be included. The workplan shall be developed in consultation with the Thames-Sydenham and Region source protection committee, participating municipalities of the source protection areas, and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The development of the workplan must take into consideration any experience that has been gained from implementing the source protection plans and information from the first annual progress reports on plan implementation (due May 1, 2018). This workplan shall take into consideration:

- opportunities for working with the Province to achieve the Great Lakes Targets outlined above;
- results of monitoring policies, programs and phosphorus and nitrate loading data from local tributaries, including the results of the County of Oxford's workplan project for the Woodstock wellfields; and,
- the effectiveness of the education and outreach policies aimed at reducing blue-green algae (microcystin-LR) and phosphorus and nitrate contributions into Lake Erie.

Accordingly, the workplan shall be submitted to the ministry no later than November 30, 2018. Once the workplan is submitted and reviewed by the ministry, and following any further consultation that the ministry considers advisable, a further order can be issued under section 36 that specifies more detailed requirements outlining the content and timeframes that will govern the review of the Upper Thames River, St. Clair Region and Lower Thames Valley source protection plans.

With your commitment, significant progress has been made in source protection. We look forward to continuing to work with you on important issues including reducing blue-green algae within the Thames-Sydenham and Region source protection region.

Once again, thank you for your work to protect Ontario's source waters, and please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,



Glen Murray
Minister

cc: Paul Evans, Deputy Minister, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Sue Lo, Assistant Deputy Minister, DWMD, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Ling Mark, Director, SPPB, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Brian McDougall, General Manager, St. Clair River Conservation Authority
Don Pearson, General Manager, Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
Chris Tasker, Project Manager, SWP Project Manager