

More water safeguards on the books

WINCHESTER – Increased guidelines for protecting the region's drinking water are to take effect in April 2015.

The news comes on the heels of the provincial government's approval of the Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Plan.

Developed by municipal and community stakeholders, the strategy has been designed to safeguard the quality of lakes, rivers, and various sources of underground water supplying the systems. As well, the plan sets out actions to eliminate, manage, or reduce potential risks.

"[It] reflects a lot of hard work... Staff have done an outstanding job and our plan contains the most up-to-date

science and policies to protect local drinking water," Claude Cousineau, Source Protection Committee chair, said.

According to the organization, the plan is also meant to establish maintenance and inspection programs for septic systems located close to drinking water systems, in order to meet building code requirements, and to create risk management plans for handling and storing pesticides, fertilizers, road salt, fuel, and manure. Road signs are also expected to be placed throughout the region in order to indicate water protection zones.

Within the plan, various water systems are covered, including 26 drinking water,

13 groundwater, and 13 surface water.

The Raisin-South Nation region stretches from Maitland, east along the St. Lawrence River to the Quebec border, and into portions of the City of Ottawa's boundary, while also encompassing Clarence-Rockland and Prescott-Russell.

South Nation includes four watersheds: Upper South Nation, Castor River, Bear Brook, and the Lower South Nation River. In Raisin Region, watersheds include Rigaud River, Delisle River, Rivière-Beaudette, Raisin River, and an interior system comprising of three connected lakes (Loch Garry, Middle Lake, and Mill Pond).

"Few things are as important to our health and well-being as having safe water to drink," Glen Murray, Ontario's environment minister, said. "Protecting the sources that supply our water is the first step in keeping [it] safe, and helps ensure we never have another Walkerton incident."

It was the death of seven people (another 1,286 fell ill) in the southern Ontario village that led to the implementation of the *Clean Water Act*. From there, 19 committees were established throughout the province, all meant to curb contamination risks.

The complete report can be viewed online at www.yourdrinkingwater.ca.