

The Walkerton Tragedy

The Event

In May of 2000 heavy rains contributed to runoff containing high quantities of manure from nearby agricultural fields. The runoff washed its way into a well that provided municipal drinking water to the residents of Walkerton, a small community in southwestern Ontario.

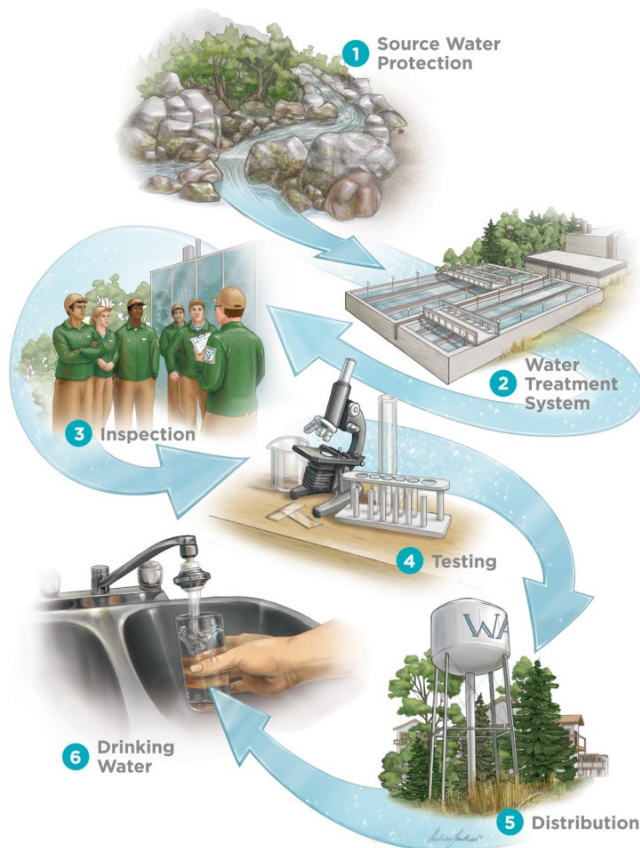
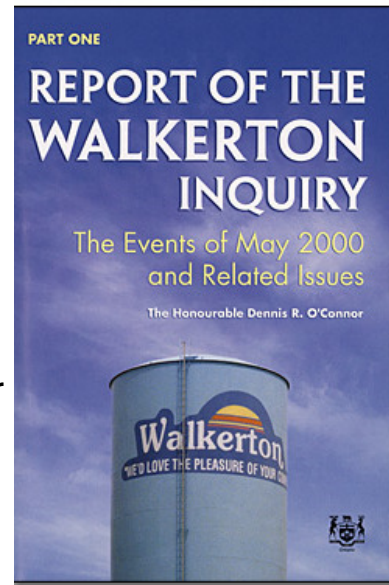
The supply became overwhelmed with *E. coli* 0157 and *Campylobacter jejuni* bacteria. This resulted in the death of seven people and 2,300 short and long term illnesses.

The Inquiry

Justice Dennis O'Connor led an inquiry for the Government of Ontario and determined multiple factors led to the tragedy including improper water treatment, failure to report water quality results, inadequate inspection programs and improper training for water treatment operators.

Recommendations to the Province:

- Establish an agency to deal with safe drinking water
- Develop watershed based plans to protect municipal drinking water
- Continuous monitoring and adequate standardized sampling
- Formal and accredited training for all water treatment operators
- Develop a comprehensive “**source to tap**” drinking water policy for each water treatment process



The Result

The Source Protection Program was established under the ***Clean Water Act, 2006***

- **Protects municipal drinking water sources**
- **Establishes Source Protection Committees to develop Source Protection Plans**
- **Policies in place to address 22 prescribed drinking water threats**

The Sudbury Source Protection Plan includes 45 policies to protect 85% of the population's drinking water:

- **3 surface water systems (Ramsey Lake/ Wanapitei River/ Vermilion River)**
- **23 groundwater wells (Valley/ Onaping/ Dowling/ Garson/ Falconbridge)**