

For immediate release

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**REMEMBERING THE WALKERTON TRAGEDY
TWENTY YEARS LATER**

Twenty years ago a small town in Southern Ontario experienced a tragedy that would impact residents, the province and the country for decades to come. In May 2000 Walkerton's municipal drinking water supply became contaminated and resulted in the death of seven people and thousands of other short and long term illnesses. The events that took place remain a constant reminder of the importance of clean and abundant drinking water.

Following the tragedy, the provincial government launched an in depth inquiry into the contamination led by Justice Dennis O'Connor. Justice O'Connor's inquiry provided several recommendations to the Province in order to guarantee the safety of municipal drinking water across Ontario. These recommendations included protecting drinking water on a watershed basis using a multi-barrier approach; this led to the introduction of the *Clean Water Act, 2006* and the establishment of the Drinking Water Source Protection Program.

The Drinking Water Source Protection Program which is administered by Conservation Authorities has been established for fifteen years. The program has resulted in the development of 22 approved Source Protection Plans, including the Sudbury Source Protection Plan which came into effect in 2015. These plans were developed by multi-stakeholder source protection committees and contain policies to address and manage activities identified as threats to drinking water. Collectively in Ontario nearly 450 municipal drinking water systems are protected by these plans.

Wendy Wisniewski, long standing committee member, remarked that "The safety of our municipal drinking water should never be something we have to consider. The foundation to ensure the delivery of safe drinking water starts with protecting it at the source. I am proud to be a part of to be part of the Sudbury Source Protection Committee that protects my community's drinking water, today and for future generations."

The Sudbury Source Protection Committee recently submitted their Third Annual Progress Report to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. This progress report evaluates actions taken to implement source protection plan policies. The City of Greater Sudbury, the Municipality of Markstay-Warren, Public Health Sudbury and Districts, and Provincial Ministries all have a role in drinking water source protection. The report is available online at <https://sourcewatersudbury.ca/en/annual-progress-report.html>

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