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HELPING COMMUNITIES PROTECT THEIR DRINKING WATER SOURCES

The McGuinty government is providing close to \$10 million in grants this year to 194 municipalities and their partners for scientific studies to support their source water protection efforts. This first round of municipal grants is part of the government's recent \$67.5 million commitment for source protection planning.

A total of \$8.5 million is going for technical studies in areas covered by conservation authorities. One hundred and eighteen municipalities have formed partnerships with each other and conservation authorities to assess and inventory threats to municipal drinking water supplies.

A total of \$1.3 million in grants is going to 75 municipalities located outside conservation authority boundaries. The grants will allow those communities to pre-screen threats to municipal drinking water systems to determine where source protection plans may be required.

For water systems that draw from groundwater, the provincial funding will build on technical information that has been gathered through local groundwater studies over the last several years.

For water systems that draw from surface water, including the Great Lakes, this is the first time that municipalities will be mapping out the areas from which intake pipes draw their drinking water, and evaluating the influences and threats to this intake zone. This vital information will form the basis of source protection plans that will address potential threats to the quality and quantity of drinking water before it reaches treatment plants.

The proposed Clean Water Act would, if passed, play a major role in fulfilling the McGuinty government's commitment to ensure that all Ontarians have access to safe drinking water. Protecting water at its source is the first step in ensuring safe drinking water. It means stopping contaminants from getting into sources of drinking water — lakes, rivers and aquifers.

For the first time, communities will be required to work together to create and carry out a plan to protect their drinking water sources. The proposed Clean Water Act would do three things:

- Direct local communities to look at any activity that could threaten water quality and take action to reduce or remove that threat.
- Empower local authorities to take action on both existing and potential future threats to water quality.
- Require that the whole community has a chance to participate in finding workable, effective solutions.

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