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LEGISLATURE PASSES CLEAN WATER ACT

Protecting Drinking Water Sources Will Benefit All Ontarians

TORONTO – Ontarians will have some of the best protected drinking water in the world with the passage of the Clean Water Act, Environment Minister Laurel Broten announced today.

“Keeping source water free of contamination is smarter, safer and more effective than cleaning up problems after the fact,” said Broten. “This groundbreaking legislation with its emphasis on prevention is a key part of a multi-barrier approach to protecting drinking water from source to tap.”

The act delivers on 12 of Justice O’Connor’s recommendations resulting from the judicial inquiry into the Walkerton tainted water tragedy. It ensures communities are able to protect their municipal drinking water supplies through developing collaborative, locally driven, science-based protection plans. Communities will identify potential risks to local water sources and take action to reduce or eliminate these risks.

The act will better protect the quantity and quality of water in aquifers, rivers and lakes, including the Great Lakes. The legislation is rooted in the Walkerton Inquiry’s recommendations that Ontario needs multiple barriers to protect drinking water starting with the sources.

“Every one of us in this province has a fundamental right to safe, clean drinking water,” said Broten. “We listened to Ontarians. We took action based on what we heard from them. And we developed strong, effective legislation that responds to local needs and safeguards the environment and the health of our people.”

Today’s announcement is just one of the ways the McGuinty government is helping Ontario communities protect their drinking water. Other initiatives include:

- Creating an advisory panel to develop a stewardship program to support water protection in rural Ontario.
- Making an initial \$7 million available immediately to help farmers and small rural businesses take early action to protect drinking water.
- Hiring 33 additional water inspectors.

The Sierra Legal Defense Fund’s October 2006 Waterproof II Report found that “the province leading Canada in protecting drinking water is Ontario.”

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