

Green Facts

Permit to Take Water

Ontarians deserve access to a clean, safe sustainable supply of water. To protect a sustainable supply, Ontario has the Permit to Take Water (PTTW) program to manage water takings.

What is the purpose of a permit to take water?

Water takings in Ontario are governed by the *Ontario Water Resources Act* (OWRA) and the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O.Reg. 387/04).

The Ministry of the Environment sets limits on the total quantity of water each permit holder can take for the duration of the permit. Water taking permits are issued for a maximum period of up to 10 years.

Who is required to obtain a permit?

Section 34 of the OWRA requires anyone taking more than a total of 50,000 litres of water in a day from a lake, stream, river or groundwater source, with some exceptions, to obtain a permit to take water.

Who is not required to obtain a permit?

Permits are not required for water taken for emergency fire fighting, watering of livestock, or private domestic use and water takings that require 50,000 litres or less in a day.

How does the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation better protect water supplies?

Ontario's water taking rules have been overhauled to better protect water supplies. Water taking rules have been strengthened to:

- ensure tough reviews of applications for takings;
- ensure water conservation measures are implemented;
- refuse certain water takings in high use watersheds;
- increase local knowledge of proposed takings; and
- require annual monitoring and reporting of takings.

Reviews of PTTW applications now have a greater emphasis on environmental considerations, such as the potential impact of proposed takings on natural water flows, habitats that depend on water flow and water levels, water availability and the interrelationship between groundwater and surface water.

Permits for new or increased takings that remove water from the watershed, where that watershed already has a high level of use, will be refused. The maps of high and medium use watershed are available on-line at www.ene.gov.on.ca. Water transfers out of the three water basins of Ontario: the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin, the Nelson Basin and the Hudson Bay Basin, are prohibited.

Notifying all affected municipalities and conservation authorities of PTTW applications that are posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry will help them provide timely comments and serve as local sources of information for people and groups who have a strong interest in an application.

All permit holders are required to collect and record data on the volume of water taken daily and report these data annually to the ministry. This requirement is being phased in from 2005 to 2007.

How do I obtain a permit?

Individuals seeking a PTTW must submit a detailed application to the Ministry of the Environment. Before completing their application form, applicants are encouraged to consult with ministry staff to initially confirm the classification for the proposed water taking. The PTTW Manual and the Guide to the PTTW Application Form, which includes the permit application form and Schedules for the application, are available at ministry regional offices or by visiting the web site listed at the bottom of this fact sheet.

The ministry evaluates each proposed water taking to ensure it meets the principles of the PTTW program including, protecting the natural functions of the ecosystem, preventing unacceptable interference with other water users, and fair sharing and conservation of the resource.

Applicants are required to classify their proposed water taking according to the three permit categories described in the PTTW Manual. The potential for adverse environmental impact or interference varies between water takings. The type, size and location of the water taking, and the condition and demand on the water source itself all influence the level of risk the taking poses. The risk-based approach to classifying and evaluating permit proposals ensures that water takings that pose the greatest risk to the environment receive a more rigorous and detailed review. There are three categories of classification for water taking applications:

Category 1 – Water takings that have a low risk of causing adverse environmental impacts or interference. For example, renewals of existing water takings for the same or lesser amount, for the same purpose, and from the same location and source, provided the continued taking is not likely to have adverse environmental impact or interference.

Category 2 and Category 3 – Water takings with a greater potential to cause adverse environmental impacts or interference. For example, new and increased water takings that are not Category 1 takings or existing takings where the permit holder has been asked to submit additional scientific studies that require an evaluation by the ministry to assess potential impact.

The ministry will confirm the water taking classification after receiving the completed application and supporting documents. Proposed water takings subject to the Environmental Bill of Rights will be posted on the ministry's Environmental Registry and public comments will be considered in the evaluation process. The ministry may consult with other agencies such as local conservation authorities, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, before making a decision on the permit application.

Who determines if a permit will be issued?

The ministry determines whether or not to issue a Permit to Take Water and what conditions to place on the permit. For Category 1, 2 or 3 water takings, the ministry places standard conditions, as well as site-specific conditions where appropriate, to ensure any environmental impacts are minimized and to prevent unacceptable interference with other water users.

How much does a permit cost?

Fees are \$750 for Category 1 and Category 2 takings and \$3,000 for Category 3 takings. The fees cover the cost of processing, evaluating and issuing the permit.

All applicants for a PTTW are required to pay a fee, except water takings for irrigation and frost protection for agricultural purposes.

Where can I get more information?

For more Information, please refer to the *Permit to Take Water Manual* and the *Guide to the Permit to Take Water Application Form*. These and other PTTW publications are available on-line at www.ene.gov.on.ca or at the regional offices listed below.

General information on the PTTW program is also available through the ministry's Public Information Centre at 1-800/565-4923 or within the Toronto calling area at 416/325-4000.

Ministry of the Environment Regional Offices

Eastern Region (Kingston)
Tel. 613/549-4000 or 1-800/267-0974

Central Region (Toronto)
Tel. 416/326-6700 or 1-800/810-8048

Northern Region (Thunder Bay)
Tel. 807/475-1205 or 1-800/875-7772

West Central Region (Hamilton)
Tel. 905/521-7640 or 1-800/668-4557

Southwest Region (London)
Tel. 519/873-5000 or 1-800/265-7672

The original application, supporting information, and the application fee must be sent to:

The Ministry of the Environment
Attention: Permit to Take Water Director,
Environmental Assessment and Approvals Branch
2 St. Clair Avenue West, Floor 12A
Toronto, Ontario M4V 1L5
Telephone: Toronto calling area at 416/314-8001 or
toll free at 1-800/461-6290.