

April 15, 2004

Mayor and Members of Council

The Corporation of the Municipality of Bluewater

14 Mill Street

Zurich, Ontario

**Re: 2004 Budget Request – BSRA Water Testing Program**

BSRA made a presentation to Council at its last meeting on April 5<sup>th</sup>, reviewing our recommendations previously submitted to Council last summer, outlining the results of our 2003 water testing and recent developments related to water quality, and indicating the general nature of our plans for water testing in 2004. Following the presentation and discussion, Bluewater Council passed the following motion unanimously:

*“WHEREAS the physical health of our residents and the economic health of our community are of vital concern to the Municipality of Bluewater; and*

*WHEREAS the testing of surface water entering Lake Huron within the Municipality of Bluewater has consistently shown high levels of E-coli bacteria; and*

*WHEREAS it has been demonstrated that faulty septic systems, municipal sewage treatment, and agricultural runoff can contribute to the presence of E-coli in surface water entering Lake Huron;*

***BE IT RESOLVED that Council request the Bluewater Shoreline Residents’ Association:***

***To provide Council later this spring with information on BSRA plans for 2004 water testing;***

***To present at a future meeting more detailed recommendations for Council to consider on ways to improve the quality of surface water entering Lake Huron by reducing potential pollution from septic systems, municipal sewage treatment, and agricultural runoff;***

***To consult with the Chief Building Official and the Manager of Public Works in the development of its recommendations related to septic systems and municipal sewage treatment; and***

***To work with the Huron County Health Unit and the committees at Huron County Council.”***

At that time, BSRA was advised that any request for 2004 Municipal funding should be submitted before the April 29<sup>th</sup> budget meeting. In response, we are providing in the attached submission a monetary request for consideration by Council during the 2004 Bluewater budget deliberations, along with the information and detailed recommendations requested by Council in its motion of April 5<sup>th</sup>.

We would request the opportunity to outline to Council the rationale for these proposals and to respond to any questions that individual Councillors may have. Subject to Council’s preference, such discussion could occur either on April 29<sup>th</sup> during the 2004 Budget deliberations, or at its next regular meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Sincerely,

John Gillespie  
President  
attachment

cc: J. Zimmerman

# Protection of Water Quality – The Municipality of Bluewater

Lake Huron is considered to be a provincial and national treasure. The Lake Huron shoreline is the basis of our County's promotion as "Ontario's West Coast" and the very name of our Municipality itself.

Unfortunately, the testing of surface water entering Lake Huron within the Municipality of Bluewater has consistently shown high levels of E-coli bacteria. Faulty septic systems, municipal sewage treatment, and agricultural runoff are known contributors to the presence of E-coli and other contaminants in surface water entering Lake Huron.

The protection of water quality within our Municipality is obviously vital to both the physical health of our residents and the economic health of our community. The recommendations in this proposal are designed to reduce contaminants within our Municipality and County, thereby protecting the water quality. Our elected representatives – Municipal, County, Provincial and Federal – have an individual and collective responsibility as stewards of this precious asset. It is our expectation that they will adopt whatever measures are necessary to protect and improve the quality of our water for present and future generations.

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## A. Background

- One of the BSRA Priorities presented to our 2003 Annual Meeting was:

*“To share information, make recommendations to, and cooperate with municipal, county and provincial officials with respect to matters affecting the environment within the Municipality of Bluewater and the County of Huron. This would include cooperative strategies that may result from the BSRA Lake Huron water testing programme.”*

In the summer of 2003, BSRA made a presentation with respect to surface water quality to the previous Bluewater Council. Our letter of July 29, 2003, outlined six recommendations made by our Environment Committee. On April 5, 2004, BSRA made a presentation to Council, reviewing the recommendations submitted to Council last summer; outlining the results of our 2003 water testing and recent developments related to water quality; and indicating the general nature of our plans for water testing in 2004.

Over the last six months, BSRA representatives have participated in the following water quality initiatives:

- November 28      **Huron County Health Unit forum re water quality.**
- April 5-6 **University of Guelph Microbial Source Tracking Workshop**

The Chairperson of the BSRA Environment Committee attended this workshop which included presentations and discussion with some of the leading North American experts in the field, and was attended by representatives of several local organizations and staff from the local regional office of various Ministries.

April 7      **Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee** initial meeting

Earlier this year, County Council established and funded the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee on which BSRA has representation.

Janisse Zimmerman, representing the Clerks and Administrators, is also a designated member of the Steering Committee. Scheduled dates for future meetings are June 17, September 23, and December 16.

## **B. Council Direction – Motion of April 5, 2004**

The following observations are made with respect to the four requests contained in this Council motion:

### **Coordination**

*“To work with the Huron County Health Unit and the committees at Huron County Council.”*

There is a degree of consensus among the members of the **County Water Protection Steering Committee** that, to the degree possible:

- efforts within Huron County to improve or protect water quality should be vetted through the Committee;
- the likelihood of financial assistance from the provincial and/or federal governments for water quality initiatives will be enhanced if such requests flow from County Council via the Committee; and
- requesting the provincial government to establish Huron County as a pilot area for projects or initiatives related to protecting water quality merits serious consideration.

The BSRA recommendations in this proposal reflect the intent of these points. The objective is to obtain approval by the Bluewater Council as soon as possible to ensure that the Bluewater-endorsed initiatives could be forwarded to the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee for information, discussion, and support at its next meeting on June 17.

## **2. Consultation**

*“To consult with the Chief Building Official and the Manager of Public Works in the development of its recommendations related to septic systems and municipal sewage treatment.”*

It is important that any proposed measures to protect and improve water quality receive an adequate level of expert review prior to implementation. BSRA has already had informal discussion on water quality issues with representatives of the following:

Huron County Health Unit;

B.M. Ross & Associates (engineering consultants both to Bluewater and Huron County with respect to matters related to water quality) who made major presentations to the County Water Protection Steering Committee meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>;

Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee facilitator: Wayne Caldwell (Senior Planner)

We expect additional consultation to occur with the above over the next month.

Clearly, discussion with the Bluewater managers responsible for matters related to water quality will also be an essential part of such consultation. The input of our Chief Building Official and Manager of Public Works – with responsibilities for septic systems, and water supply and sewage lagoons respectively – will be important in developing implementation strategies.

## **3. BSRA 2004 Water Testing**

*“To provide Council later this spring with information on BSRA plans for 2004 water testing.”*

BSRA has conducted its water testing in consultation with the Huron County Health Unit. The Huron County Health Unit noted at the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the county Lake Huron Water Protection Steering Committee that a beach water testing program as conducted in the past in Huron County is not part of the mandate from the Ministry of Health for a county health unit, but rather reflects a local decision for such extended testing. This raises a question about the nature and extent of future testing by the County Health Unit.

It is not the intent of shoreline residents to duplicate the efforts of the Health Unit, but rather complement, or go beyond the limits of their program. We would note, however, that the BSRA testing of ravine water emptying into Lake Huron, in addition to the adjacent beaches, is an example of testing that provides information beyond the Health Unit beach tests alone. It has demonstrated clearly that there are significant amounts of E-coli present in the streams emptying into Lake Huron.

2004 marks the ninth year for a resident-initiated program of testing ravine and beach water along the Lake Huron shoreline within the boundaries of the Municipality of Bluewater. This experience of eight years illustrates the importance of continued testing to determine what progress, if any, is being made to reduce the contaminants entering Lake Huron via its feeder ravine streams.

BSRA plans to extend its traditional testing methods in 2004 to include DNA-type testing to confirm contaminant sources. Discussions are currently under way with representatives of testing labs as to the number and location of testing sites. Only by identifying specific sources can corrective measures be tailored to reduce or eliminate a specific contaminant, and thereby improve and protect water quality.

Since such identification is of benefit to the entire Municipality of Bluewater, Council is being requested in this proposal to contribute financially to defray the cost. A neighbouring Huron County municipality – Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh – has already shown leadership in this regard by contributing to the cost of a similar testing program coordinated by the Ashfield Colborne Lakefront Association.

#### 4. **Reducing Potential Pollution**

*“To present at a future meeting more detailed recommendations for Council to consider on ways to improve the quality of surface water entering Lake Huron ...”*

The recommendations on the following pages are designed “to improve the quality of surface water entering Lake Huron by reducing potential pollution from septic systems, municipal sewage treatment, and agricultural runoff.” These recommendations provide a unique opportunity for Bluewater to assume a leadership role, both within our own Municipality and within the entire County of Huron, with respect to the protection of water quality.

It is important that, to the degree possible, Bluewater seek to obtain coordination of action on a county-wide basis through the Lake Huron Water Protection Steering Committee. However, it should be noted that such county-level discussions do not relieve our elected and administrative officials from their responsibility to assume leadership with respect to water quality measures within our own Municipality of Bluewater.

### **C. Recommendations**

- 1. That Council review the results of the 2004 BSRA water testing program to determine what additional measures should be considered to improve or protect water quality.**
- 2. That Bluewater Council recommend to the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee that the watershed with the outflow at the St. Joseph ravine be established as an area**

**for a water quality pilot initiative involving the following components:**

**(a) Septic system pumpout, inspection and maintenance/upgrading**

The Municipality of Bluewater should:

- Seek through the **Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee** the establishment of a fund for the purpose of providing loans to property owners wishing or required to upgrade septic systems;
- Avail itself of the provisions of the Building Code requiring inspection of septic systems by arranging for the **Huron County Health Unit** to monitor the pumping out and inspection by September 1, 2005, of all septic systems within the designated pilot project area;
- Where such inspection indicates that expenditures are required to upgrade a septic system, require such upgrading to be completed within 12 months of the availability of a loan from such a fund, or July 1, 2007, whichever shall occur earlier; and
- Upon receipt of a **report from the Huron County Health Unit** on the monitoring of septic systems within the designated pilot area, consider adopting the measures necessary to implement a septic system inspection program across the entire Municipality of Bluewater.

**(b) Sewage treatment: Wards of Zurich, Hay (East & West), and Stanley (East & West)**

The Municipality of Bluewater should seek, through the **Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee**, government **funding** to support:

- the **upgrading** of the Zurich sewage lagoons to enable the facility to adequately process sewage from existing sources, and to service the Bluewater Rest Home;
- the **expansion** of the Zurich sewage lagoons to provide the capacity necessary to process:
  - septage received from septic systems within the Municipality; and
  - farm manure, as an alternative to spreading on tiled fields;
- a feasibility study with respect to alternatives for treating sewage along the Highway 21 / lakeshore corridor, including:
  - sewers (at a minimum in the area from Grand Bend to St. Joseph); and/or
  - smaller communal treatment systems in larger shoreline subdivisions.

**(c) Consultation and Partnership with Agricultural Operations Within the Designated Watershed Area to Achieve Project Goals**

The Municipality of Bluewater should establish a **Steering Committee** with the following **Terms of Reference**:

- To identify all agricultural producers in the designated watershed area;
- To encourage participation on the project Steering Committee;

- To ensure awareness among agricultural producers of water quality issues and project details;
- To determine the percentage of agricultural operations with nutrient management and environmental farm plans;
- To encourage creation and implementation of nutrient management and environmental farm plans for all agricultural operations in the designated watershed area;
- To examine alternative methods of treatment / disposal of manure generated from agricultural operations; and
- To **report to the Bluewater Council and Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee in the fall of 2007** with respect to the project, and to recommend such additional measures as may be deemed necessary to ensure the protection of water quality.

**3. That Bluewater Council endorse the following water protection measures for consideration by the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee:**

- Increasing the **supports** provided to **“family farm” operations**.

Family farm operators typically live in our community, are active members of the community, live by the same values as a majority of Bluewater residents, and are a strong positive component of the Bluewater community. The existence of family farm operations is under threat primarily from the expansion of factory farms. Council should become more involved in supporting this component of our community.

- Imposing a **moratorium on livestock “factory farm” developments** – either expansions or new operations.

While complex, a method of defining factory farms and family farms is possible. Factory farm operations create an ongoing environmental risk due to the volume of manure produced and the common farming practice of applying manure to agricultural fields. While ultimately this issue may have to be resolved on a provincial basis, Council has the power to achieve a moratorium for the Municipality of Bluewater through its control of official plans, zoning bylaws, bylaw variances and building permits.

- Imposing a moratorium, pending provincial action, on any expansion or implementation of livestock operations that will use the **application of liquid manure** to agricultural fields as part of their nutrient/manure management plan.

**4. That the 2004 Bluewater Budget include the following amounts for Water Quality Initiatives:**

- **BSRA Water Testing Program** [See Recommendation 1]

(BSRA to be reimbursed for 2004 water test expenditures up to limit of budget.)

\$ 5,000 Continuation of 2003 program sites and methodolog

\$ 10,000 Expanded program using DNA testing to confirm contaminant sources

- **Sewage treatment study** [See Recommendation 2 (b)]

\$ 5,000 Preparatory work necessary to prepare government funding submissions

- **Agricultural Operations Within Designated Watershed Area** [See Recommendation 2 (c)]

\$ 5,000 Municipality of Bluewater Steering Committee