

May 17, 2004

Mr. Bert Dykstra, Chair
Water Protection Steering Committee
County of Huron
1 Court House Square
Goderich, ON
N7A 1M2

Dear Mr. Dykstra:

Re: Water Protection Initiatives – 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 – "*Bluewater*".

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. 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.

Attached is a plan proposed by the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association, and endorsed by the Bluewater Council, that is intended to contribute to the protection and improvement of water quality both within our own Municipality and along the Lake Huron shoreline. The recommendations in this proposal are designed to reduce contaminants within our Municipality and County, thereby protecting the water quality.

We would request that the attached proposal be placed on the agenda for the June 17th meeting of the Water Protection Steering Committee and that we have an opportunity to make a presentation at that time. Inasmuch as certain recommendations may relate to the mandate of two County Council Committees, Bluewater Council requested that the proposal also be forwarded to them for their information and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Gillespie

President

attachment

cc: County of Huron Committees:

- Agriculture, Public Works and Seniors
- Health and Planning

Municipality of Bluewater

Protection of Water Quality – The Municipality of Bluewater

A. Introduction

- The *Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association* (BSRA) is an umbrella federation whose membership consists of representatives of the various resident associations existing in approximately 50 shoreline communities in the two Bluewater Wards of Stanley West and Hay West.
- This linear shoreline community is financially significant to both the Municipality of Bluewater and the County of Huron in that these two wards represent approximately 40 percent of Bluewater tax revenue, and their contribution to the County levy exceeds that of three of the nine Huron County municipalities.

B. BSRA 2004 Water Testing

- Water quality has been a concern to shoreline residents for some time. 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.
- 2004 marks the ninth year for a resident-initiated and resident-funded program of testing ravine and beach water along the Lake Huron shoreline within the boundaries of the Municipality of Bluewater. Water testing originated with the St. Joseph Shores Association in the mid 1990's. In 2003, BSRA

initiated an extended program involving testing in four ravines and eight beach locations covering most of the Bluewater shoreline. Unfortunately, this testing of surface water entering Lake Huron within the Municipality of Bluewater has consistently shown high levels of E-coli bacteria. 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 has conducted its water testing in consultation with the Huron County Health Unit. The Huron County Health Unit noted at the April 7th meeting of the 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. However, we would note 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. Test results over the last several years have clearly demonstrated that there are significant amounts of E-coli present in the streams emptying into Lake Huron.

- 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 and any resultant corrective measures are of benefit to the entire County of Huron, County Council is being requested in this proposal to contribute financially to defray the cost (see Recommendation 4).

C. Development of This Proposal

- BSRA representatives have participated in the following recent 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.

a. April 7 **Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee**

BSRA has representation on this Committee established and funded earlier this year by County Council.

- One of the BSRA Priorities endorsed by 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, outlining six recommendations made by our Environment Committee.
- On April 5, 2004, BSRA made a presentation to Bluewater Council, reviewing the recommendations submitted 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."*

D. Recommendations

- The BSRA recommendations in this section are in direct response to this request from Bluewater Council. They 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.*"
- During the discussion at the initial meeting of the Water Protection Steering Committee meeting on April 7th, there appeared to be consensus that:
 - efforts within Huron County to improve or protect water quality should, to the degree possible, be vetted through the Committee;
 - requesting the provincial government to establish Huron County as a pilot area for projects or initiatives related to protecting water quality merits serious consideration; and
 - 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.
- The BSRA recommendations in this proposal reflect the intent of these points. Although BSRA intends to proceed with its action plans this year, with the water testing program to commence shortly, it would be the preference of both our Association and the Bluewater Council that such water protection initiatives be coordinated on a county-wide basis through the Steering Committee.
- Accordingly, these Bluewater-endorsed initiatives are submitted to the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee for information, discussion, and support at the earliest possible date. These recommendations provide a unique opportunity for the Water Protection Steering Committee to assume a leadership role with respect to the protection and improvement of water quality within our County.
- Early endorsement and financial support by County Council would demonstrate the level of commitment of our elected officials, as stewards of this precious asset, to protecting this provincial and national treasure.

Recommendation 1

That the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee endorse the decision of the Municipality of Bluewater to establish the watershed with the outflow at the St. Joseph ravine as an area for a water quality pilot initiative involving the

following components:

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

It is anticipated that the Municipality of Bluewater will:

- 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 (West & East), and Stanley (West & East)

BSRA has recommended that the Municipality of Bluewater consider, subject to financial support from senior levels of government, the following measures:

- 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

BSRA has recommended that the Municipality of Bluewater 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 2006** with respect to the project, and to recommend such additional measures as may be deemed necessary to ensure the protection of water quality.

Recommendation 2

That the **Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee** seek **government funding** to support the following water quality initiatives:

- a. The establishment of a **fund** for the purpose of **providing loans** to Huron County property owners wishing, or required, **to upgrade septic systems**;
- b. The **upgrading and expansion of the Zurich sewage lagoons**:
 - to enable the facility to adequately process sewage from existing sources, and to service the Bluewater Rest Home;
 - 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. 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.

Recommendation 3

That the Huron County Water Protection Steering Committee review the results of the 2004 BSRA water testing program to determine what additional measures should be considered to improve or protect water quality.

Recommendation 4

That the Water Protection Steering Committee recommend that Huron County Council provide to the Municipality of Bluewater financial support from the 2004 County Budget for the following Water Quality Initiatives:

- **Water Testing Program** [See Recommendation 3]
 - \$ 5,000 Continuation of 2003 BSRA program sites and methodology
 - \$ 10,000 Expanded program using DNA testing to confirm contaminant sources
- **Sewage treatment study** [See Recommendation 1 (b)]
 - \$ 5,000 Preparatory work necessary to prepare government funding submissions

c. 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.

