

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Operations Committee  
**Report From:** Bryce McDonald, Manager of Water and Wastewater  
**Meeting Date:** April 17, 2025  
**Report Code:** OP-25-017  
**Subject:** Drinking Water Standard of Care

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-25-017 respecting Drinking Water Standard of Care, the Operations Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

### Highlights:

- History – Walkerton Event
- Recommendations and Legislative Changes
- Owner’s Responsibilities and Recent Events

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: Service Excellence.

This report and presentation align with our responsibility and commitment, as outlined in our endorsed Quality Management Systems policy, to deliver quality, sustainability, and continuous improvement.

### Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City’s Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by strengthening the resiliency of City infrastructure or services.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

N/A

## **Background:**

Following the Walkerton tragedy in the spring of 2000, a thorough investigation and inquiry were conducted, and provincial drinking water legislation was overhauled based on numerous recommendations by Justice Dennis O'Connors. One of the significant additions was related to the Statutory Standard of Care, as outlined in Section 19 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) of 2002.

The Standard of Care, which took effect on December 31, 2012, expressly extends legal responsibility to individuals with decision-making authority over municipal drinking water systems. It requires that they exercise the level of care, diligence and skill regarding a municipal drinking water system that a reasonably prudent person would be expected to exercise in a similar situation. It is also likely that they exercise this due diligence honestly, competently and with integrity. Standard of Care legislation applies to municipal councils and management but does not directly apply to certified drinking water operators.

## **Analysis:**

This report and presentation are prepared to provide an overview of the similar Standard of Care training that City councillors receive, with the understanding that the Operations Committee receives information, reviews, and makes recommendations, which are part of our Council's approval processes that may impact resources or operational priorities.

## **Financial Implications:**

There is no direct financial implication for this report and presentation, but a better understanding of the drinking water standard of care may influence future recommendations to the council through this committee.

## **Communication Strategy:**

N/A

## **Consultation:**

This report and presentation were prepared in consultation with the Director of Public Works.

## **Attachments:**

1. Standard of Care – Operations Committee Presentation

## **Recommended by:**

Bryce McDonald, Manager of Water and Wastewater

Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works

## **Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Bryce McDonald, Manager of Water and Wastewater, at [bmcDonald@owensound.ca](mailto:bmcDonald@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4274 Ext. 3224.