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Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

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# Updating Ontario's Water Quantity Management Framework

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Proposal Paper

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# Minister's Message

Ontario is home to over 250,000 lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and significant groundwater sources that are the foundation of Ontario's wellbeing and economic prosperity. They supply safe and reliable sources of drinking water, sustain traditional activities of Indigenous peoples and support our economy and healthy ecosystems.

Although Ontario has abundant water resources, occasional drought and seasonal water shortages can occur in some local watersheds and areas of the province where groundwater supplies are naturally limited.

The people of Ontario can be confident that these water resources are protected by good policy that is based on solid science and evidence. This is why the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan commits to protecting our lakes, waterways and groundwater supply, now and for future generations.

In December 2019, the government extended the moratorium on new or increasing permits to take groundwater to produce bottled water until October 1, 2020, to provide time to consider the findings of our review and to publicly consult on changes to how we manage water takings before the moratorium ends.

This also gave us time to ask an independent third-party to review our findings so that we could be sure we got it right. The independent third-party review confirmed that bottled water takings in Ontario are not impacting the sustainability of groundwater resources and that water takings for bottling are managed sustainably in Ontario under existing legislation, regulation and guidance.

To increase public transparency and further ensure that vital water resources are adequately protected and used sustainably in the province, we are proposing enhancements to Ontario's water taking program.

These proposed enhancements include:

- Requiring water bottling companies to have the support of their host municipalities for new and increasing bottled water takings, with an exemption for small businesses.
- Establishing priorities of water use in the province that can guide water taking decisions.

- Assessing and managing multiple water takings together in areas of the province where water sustainability is a concern.
- Making water taking data available to the public to increase transparency of how Ontario manages water resources.

This proposal paper outlines the actions we are proposing to take. We encourage you to provide your input on the proposed actions in this proposal paper and look forward to reviewing your comments before making any enhancements to Ontario's water quantity management program. Comments and responses to the specific questions in this proposal can be submitted to us through the Environmental Registry until August 2, 2020.

# Introduction

## Ontario's framework for managing water takings

In Ontario, no one “owns” water in the ground or in lakes and rivers in the province. The Government of Ontario is responsible for managing the water in the province on behalf of all Ontarians. Multiple provincial ministries share the responsibility for managing water in Ontario. Indigenous communities and local agencies, including municipalities and conservation authorities, also have important roles. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (the ministry) is responsible for administering the *Ontario Water Resources Act* whose purpose is to “provide for the conservation, protection and management of Ontario’s waters and for their efficient and sustainable use, in order to promote Ontario’s long-term environmental, social and economic well-being”. This includes the authority to regulate water takings through section 34 of that Act and the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04). Additionally, the *Ontario Water Resources Act* gives the Minister supervision over all surface and ground waters in Ontario.

Any water taking exceeding 50,000 litres on any day requires a Permit to Take Water, with exceptions for domestic uses, watering of livestock or poultry, wetland conservation, construction-related water diversion, firefighting and other emergency purposes. 50,000 litres is roughly the volume of a large tanker truck, or the amount of water needed to fill a backyard swimming pool to a depth of one metre. The ministry manages water takings within this framework based on the principles of fair sharing, conservation and sustainable use. A Permit to Take Water does not allocate a right to water or guarantee a supply of water. A permit is also not guaranteed to be renewed. Science plays an important role in our decision-making process when we review permit applications. Applications are classified according to their potential for risk to the environment and interference with other water users, with higher risk water taking proposals requiring additional technical studies for scientific review by the ministry.

Lower-risk water takings (e.g., specific construction-related water taking activities) prescribed in regulation under the *Environmental Protection Act* are not required to obtain a Permit to Take Water, but instead are registered under the Environmental Activity Sector Registry.

Ontario recognizes the value that Indigenous peoples place on the environment and that we share a common interest in protecting, conserving and managing the waters of Ontario for present and future generations. Ontario remains committed to engaging with Indigenous communities on water taking decisions.

## The water bottling moratorium

Drought conditions in 2016 renewed public concerns about water security in Ontario. Some Ontarians expressed concern about the impact that water bottling operations have on groundwater supplies and the province's ability to effectively monitor and regulate these facilities. More broadly, there was a growing interest in the management of the water resources in the province including to ensure it can protect their long-term sustainability.

In response to these concerns, in December 2016, a temporary moratorium was put in place on new or increased permits to take groundwater to produce bottled water through the "Taking Ground Water to Produce Bottled Water" Regulation (Ontario Regulation 463/16) under the *Ontario Water Resources Act*. The moratorium prohibits new and increasing groundwater takings for water bottling facilities if they take more than 50,000 litres of water in a day. All existing facilities with a permit for water bottling are subject to a regulatory charge of \$500 per million litres of groundwater taken. This regulatory charge is required to be reviewed by 2022 to assess if it is set at an appropriate level to recover applicable provincial costs.

The moratorium was put in place to give the ministry time to undertake an assessment of water resources in the province, including in areas where water bottlers currently operate, and to review the province's policies, programs and science tools for managing water takings.

In December 2019, the government extended the moratorium to provide time to consider the findings of our review and to publicly consult on changes to how we manage water takings before the moratorium ends. The moratorium expires on October 1, 2020. Extending the moratorium also gave the ministry time to ask an independent third-party to review our findings on bottled water takings so that we could be sure we got it right.

## The ministry's water quantity management review

The ministry recently completed its review of the province's policies, programs and science tools for managing water takings in Ontario. To ensure the review was comprehensive, we considered multiple sources of information related to water management policies, the Permit to Take Water Program and water resource (surface and groundwater) science. The ministry retained the consulting services of an external third-party water expert and consultant, BluMetric Environmental Inc., to help review best science practices and water resource management approaches in other jurisdictions.

The consultant completed an assessment of water resources in the province, focusing on selected water quantity study areas potentially vulnerable to the cumulative effects of multiple water users, drought, climate change, population growth or changing land use. This allowed the ministry to better understand the challenges of managing water takings under different resource conditions and water use scenarios. BluMetric also evaluated areas where there are existing permits to take groundwater for the purpose of water bottling, examining whether these types of water takings are being adequately managed within the water taking permitting framework.

For more information on the BluMetric study, to read a short summary of their findings, or to download the full reports, visit the Environmental Registry at <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1340>

## Main conclusions of the review

### **Ontario has an effective framework for managing water takings**

The current framework for managing water takings in Ontario is well suited to assessing and managing the impacts of individual water taking proposals. Permit applications are considered on a risk-basis and decisions are made according to scientific evidence. Proposed water takings that are considered more complex, or those that might pose a risk to the sustainability of water resources, require extra attention. These applications must be accompanied by a technical report prepared by a professional engineer, professional geoscientist or surface water specialist with the appropriate expertise for the application, demonstrating that the water taking can occur without causing unacceptable impacts to the environment and/or other water users. The ministry's groundwater and surface water science experts then review these reports to confirm the findings.

In evaluating a Permit to Take Water application, the ministry considers several factors, such as the anticipated impact of the proposed water taking on aquatic ecosystems and water availability in the area, how the water is being used, and the input of other persons or communities who have an interest in the water taking.

If the review of an application determines that a water taking will likely lead to unacceptable impacts on the environment or other water users, the ministry modifies or rejects the proposed taking.

If it is determined that the proposed water taking is unlikely to interfere with other water users, including the environment, the ministry issues a permit, specifying the purpose of the taking and the amount of water that can be taken in a single day and over the course of a year. As part of the permit, monitoring is required and often includes specific conditions that require actions to be taken to address any unforeseen impacts. Every holder of a permit must annually report to the ministry the amount of water taken each day during a calendar year. Even after a permit has been issued, the ministry can limit, alter, or stop any water taking that is deemed to cause an unacceptable impact. This provision allows the ministry to respond to changing environmental and land use conditions or deal with unforeseen impacts. The *Permit to Take Water Manual* (April 2005), describes the decision-making process followed by the ministry, and outlines the requirements and considerations that are generally taken into account when the ministry is evaluating a proposed or existing water taking.

Ontario's existing assessment approaches and practices for managing individual water takings are consistent with, and in many cases exceed, the science and management practices used in other jurisdictions.

### **Bottled water takings are being managed sustainably under the existing framework**

The review found that water takings for water bottling in Ontario are being managed sustainably under the current framework. Groundwater resources in areas where water bottling is occurring were found to be sustainable under historical and current permitted volumes of water takings and climate conditions. The review indicates that the impacts of existing bottled water takings on groundwater and nearby surface water resources, and on the water supplies for municipalities and other existing water takers are negligible.

We recognize the importance of these issues to Ontarians and the strong interest of local communities in ensuring that water bottling operations do not affect the long-term sustainability of their water supplies. This is why the ministry asked a panel from Professional Geoscientists Ontario to conduct an independent third-party expert review of our conclusions



on water bottling. The panel found that the ministry's findings are reasonable and concur that water takings for water bottling are being managed sustainably in Ontario. The report on their review of our findings can be found on the Environmental Registry at:

<https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-1340>

These findings give us confidence that after the current moratorium expires, groundwater takings for water bottling will be managed effectively under the ministry's risk-based framework in the same way as all other purposes of water taking.

## **Water resources in Ontario are generally sustainable, with a few local exceptions**

Throughout Ontario, groundwater and surface water resources are generally sustainable under current climate conditions and levels of water use. The results of the review indicated that there are exceptions within the study areas that experience high water use in the summer and are more susceptible to lower summer stream flows and drought. This is compounded when there are a high number of surface water takings and significant water demand in the summer for irrigation (e.g., some areas of the Norfolk Sand Plain, and Innisfil Creek watersheds). The review highlighted areas where groundwater and surface water are closely linked and where water quantity stress to one resource can quickly affect the other. Some areas using shallow groundwater sources (e.g., Quinte, Norfolk Sand Plain, and Whitemans Creek watershed) are also sensitive to drought. In the Quinte study area, water availability is naturally limited due to the ability of the local geology to store water. In this case, water takings are not a contributing factor to the sustainability of the water resources.

## **Opportunities to enhance the current framework to be more resilient to current and future water quantity management challenges**

Looking to the future, changing climate and population growth may affect water sustainability in the province. Population growth and its accompanying demands for water raises questions about the future availability of water for municipal water supply, and the impacts of increasing municipal water takings on water resources and other water users over the long term. There is also some uncertainty as to how changes in climate and land use will affect the long-term sustainability of groundwater and surface water in some areas.

The review identified opportunities to build on the strong foundation of policy, program and science tools that are already used to manage water takings in Ontario, including:

- Establishing clear provincial priorities of water use to guide decisions where there are competing demands for water;

- Updating our approach to managing water takings in water quantity-stressed areas;
- Making water taking data, including data the ministry collects from permitted water takers, more accessible to the public; and
- Giving host municipalities more input into water bottling decisions.

## Where do we want to go?

The ministry is proposing changes to water taking policies, programs and science tools based on the outcome of the water quantity management review. The following table outlines the goals and desired outcomes we are aiming to achieve to ensure water resources in Ontario are protected and sustainably used.

Goal	Desired Outcomes
Goal 1: Establish clear provincial priorities of water use	<p>Increased transparency so the public and water takers can learn about the criteria the ministry considers in water taking decisions to resolve situations where there are competing demands for water.</p> <p>Clearer and consistent direction on when and how priorities are considered and applied.</p>
Goal 2: Update our approach to managing water takings in stressed areas	More proactive measures to manage water takings based on assessments and circumstances within an area, including for managing drought.
Goal 3: Make water taking data more accessible	<p>Greater access to water quantity data for water managers and the public.</p> <p>Increased water literacy in Ontario.</p>
Goal 4: Give host municipalities more input into water bottling decisions	More say by municipalities before proposed new or expanded water takings for water bottling are considered in their jurisdiction.

# Goal 1: Establish clear provincial priorities of water use

When water is in short supply, decisions must be made about how the available water should be shared among water users (including the environment). Some jurisdictions identify priorities among different purposes of water use in their water management framework. In many cases, priorities are used to determine restrictions on water taking during drought. Setting out priorities of water use in Ontario would provide clearer and more consistent direction for managing water takings in situations where there are competing demands for water.

The ministry has an existing guideline for evaluating the relative priority of water uses in an area where there is insufficient water to meet existing and new uses of water. In such cases, the takings of water for private domestic and farm purposes (i.e., livestock watering) are considered the most important uses, generally followed by water takings for municipal water supply. The taking of water for industrial, commercial and irrigation purposes is determined by the availability of the water supply, and in consideration of the efficiency of use, and the existing uses in the area.

Currently, these priorities of water use are not established in the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04), therefore limiting formal direction on how they should be considered by the ministry in making water taking decisions.

## Proposed Actions

### Establish priorities of water use in regulation

The ministry is proposing to amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04) to identify the following priorities of water use:

<p><b>I. Highest Priority Uses</b></p>	<p>Highest priority uses would be considered in the following order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Environment and Drinking Water (equally) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Environment</i> (e.g., maintaining stream flows, water levels and water quality to protect human health and sustain freshwater ecosystems)</li> <li>• <i>Drinking Water</i> (e.g., municipal and Indigenous water supplies, private domestic use, livestock watering, schools, hospitals)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Agricultural Irrigation</li> </ol>
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<b>II. Priority Among Other Uses</b>	Uses not listed above would be prioritized in the following order: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Industrial / Commercial (e.g., golf course irrigation, aggregate washing, industrial cooling)</li><li>2. Others (e.g., aesthetics, other non-essential uses)</li></ol>
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## Provide guidance on applying priorities of water use

Guidance will be developed to provide direction on when and how the priorities would be considered and applied. For example, the ministry could apply the priorities when necessary to place temporary restrictions on existing water takings during drought conditions. The priorities of water use could also guide decisions for permitting new or increased water takings in areas where longer-term water sustainability is a concern. In these circumstances, the needs of existing water users would be considered before additional water taking is permitted.

It is intended that any restrictions imposed on water takers based on the proposed priorities of water use would be exercised as a last resort, once other approaches to address competing demands for water have been exhausted. For example, the ministry would ensure that higher priority water users are taking reasonable measures to optimize their water supply, storage, and distribution infrastructure, including using water efficiently and addressing water leakage, before requiring lower priority users to reduce their water takings. The ministry would also want to explore opportunities for voluntary arrangements among water users to share the limited resource (e.g., staggering water takings) before imposing any restrictions on lower priority uses.

## Discussion Questions

Let us know your thoughts on the discussion questions below.

1. Do you support including priorities of water use in regulation? Why or why not?
2. How should priorities of use be applied to water taking decisions? When should it be applied? What process should be followed? Who should be involved? What information should be considered?
3. Municipal drinking water supply is proposed as a highest priority use. What municipal drinking water needs should be considered a priority (e.g., current, planned growth, longer-term growth)?

## Goal 2: Update our approach to managing water takings in stressed areas

Understanding the cumulative effect of multiple water takings on stream flows, water levels (including groundwater levels) and other water users is critical to guide effective management actions in areas experiencing water quantity stress. In some cases, a single water taking alone may not have a significant effect, but multiple water takings, cumulatively, may affect the sustainability of the water resource and as a result, the water users and aquatic ecosystems that depend on it. It can be difficult to assess cumulative effects when considering individual applications for a Permit to Take Water. In some cases, an approach that assesses and manages water resources and the impact of multiple water takings on an area-basis is needed.

In 2004, high use watershed maps and policies were included in the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04). The approach was intended to address areas of Ontario where the cumulative demand for water was high relative to the available supply. Within designated high use watersheds, the regulation prohibits new or increased permitted water takings for purposes that incorporate water into products, such as beverage manufacturing, fruit or vegetable canning, and ready-mix concrete.

Today, the high use watershed maps and the associated prohibition that currently applies in the designated watersheds do not respond to the unique management challenges that exist within specific areas of the province. An updated approach to managing areas with water sustainability concerns that is adaptive to changing conditions and that can tailor assessments and management actions to local circumstances, is needed.

Drought can place temporary stress on water resources within some areas. While the ministry has authority to alter or revoke a permit if conditions of the water resource change over time, it is not practical to determine mitigative actions reactively during drought, especially where the density of permitted water takings is high. A more proactive approach is needed to guide how water takings could be managed when drought occurs, and how to mitigate the effects of low water conditions to reduce the severity of droughts. Similarly, it is important for individual water takers to consider in advance, contingency measures they could take in the event of drought (e.g., identifying a back-up water supply).

Ontario Low Water Response is a provincial tool administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry that enables provincial and local authorities to be prepared in the event of low water conditions. It provides a framework for cooperatively managing low water and drought mitigation and response at the local level. Permitted water takings are an important

consideration for drought response in many local areas. Looking forward, there may be opportunities to better coordinate the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' framework for managing water takings with Ontario Low Water Response policies and activities.

## Proposed Actions

### **Add authority in regulation to manage water takings on an area basis**

Subsection 4(2) of the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04) requires the ministry to consider water availability and ecosystem needs when reviewing water taking applications. The associated policy guidance gives Permit to Take Water Directors discretion, where needed, to assess and manage a group of water takings within an area.

The ministry is proposing to enhance this existing authority by amending subsection 4(2) of the regulation to add explicit direction for Permit to Take Water Directors to consider, where relevant, the effects of a group of water takings on water availability and aquatic ecosystems within an area.

### **Update existing guidance for managing water takings on an area basis**

The ministry is proposing to update existing guidance to provide clearer direction to Permit to Take Water Directors for exercising their authority to make permitting decisions in a manner that assesses and manages a group of water takings on an area basis. For example, additional guidance would be provided on:

- circumstances in which an area-based approach should be considered (e.g., when water resource sustainability is a concern);
- processes for undertaking assessments and developing a management strategy for an area;
- methods and standards for undertaking technical studies, for example to assess sustainability, cumulative effects, environmental flow needs, or drought susceptibility within an area;
- engaging water users, local stakeholders, and Indigenous communities in the process; and
- coordinating water taking decisions within an area with other provincial programs, such as drinking water source protection and Ontario Low Water Response.

## **Develop additional guidance for managing water takings in drought conditions**

The ministry is proposing to develop additional guidance that would encourage proactive measures to manage water takings under drought conditions. The guidance would cover issues such as how the ministry could apply restrictions on water takings during a drought and recommend contingency planning by water takers in the event of drought conditions. Options for a new drought indicator for shallow groundwater resources would also be examined that could support decisions about managing takings from groundwater during drought. The proposed guidance and technical work would be coordinated with Ontario Low Water Response and will ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and that there is no duplication of efforts and policies.

## **Replacing high use watershed maps and prohibitions in the regulation**

The ministry is proposing to amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04) to replace section 3 (the high use watershed maps) and section 5 (the policies that apply within high use watersheds) with the approach proposed above. The changes would take effect on October 1, 2020.

## **Discussion Questions**

Let us know your thoughts on the discussion questions below.

1. Under what circumstances should the ministry consider assessing and managing water takings on an area basis?
2. What suggestions do you have for the process of assessing and developing a strategy to manage water takings on an area basis? For example, how should local water users, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities be engaged?
3. How can the province help water users be more prepared for drought?

## Goal 3: Make water taking data more accessible

Water resource data plays an important role in supporting evidence-based decision-making. It allows us to build better programs and services to ensure sustainable water use and water security for future generations. Provincial and federal governments, through several water resources programs, monitor, collect and publicly share water quantity data including groundwater and surface water levels and flows, precipitation and other climate data such as drought occurrence.

As part of the Permit to Take Water Program, the ministry collects data on the amounts of water taken daily by permit holders, as well as water monitoring and survey data associated with permit applications and conditions. Permitting enables monitoring and tracking of actual water use, informs provincial water management initiatives, and provides a mechanism to resolve incidents for unacceptable interference between water takers. These data are not currently available to the public.

Improved and more timely access to water quantity data was identified as a key gap in the ministry's review of its current water quantity management framework. Providing public access to water quantity data unlocks the value of the data and promotes increased trust and transparency in the government's management of water resources.

For example, making the data regarding the amounts of water taken by permit holders publicly available would support local water use planning decisions, improve the quality of water resource assessments and reduce administrative burden and costs for those who apply for and review Permits to Take Water. Also, publishing the data would remove the need for costly and time-consuming requests for such information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection and Privacy Act*. Further, data would be used by the province to better communicate the state of groundwater and surface water resources.

### Proposed Actions

#### **Enable sharing of government water quantity data**

The ministry is proposing to amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04) and the Environmental Activity Sector Registry (EASR) - Water Taking Regulation (O. Reg. 63/16) under the *Environmental Protection Act*, to allow the ministry to make available to the public, water taking data currently being reported by permit holders, as well as monitoring data submitted in an application for or as a condition of a Permit to Take Water.



Within two years of amending the regulations, the ministry would publish the water taking data on Ontario's Open Data Catalogue and provide updates annually. Water level, flow monitoring and survey data associated with permits would be shared with water managers and interested parties by request, with a longer-term goal of making the data available publicly.

### **Enhance access to government water quantity data**

The ministry is proposing to build a public-facing online resource that would house data and data analysis tools. This online resource would consolidate, integrate, and provide timely public access to existing and new data (e.g., reported water takings under permits, stream flows and water levels, and groundwater levels).

The ministry is also planning to enhance existing data and collect new data to support science-based water quantity management in the province.

The ministry also plans to share knowledge and build water literacy in Ontario by regularly communicating information on the state of water resources and water resource management programs to water managers, water users, Indigenous communities and organizations, and the public.

### **Discussion Questions**

Let us know your thoughts on the discussion questions below.

1. Is there any water quantity and monitoring information reported to the ministry that should not be made publicly available? If so, why?
2. Would the proposed online resource be helpful to you? Why or why not? Are there other mechanisms for sharing this information that would be helpful to you?
3. What data would you like to see included in the online resource?
4. How would you like to see water quantity data presented? What are the most useful formats (e.g. maps with embedded information, reports, tables, story pages)?
5. What water resources information and guidance would you like to see made available to the public?

## Goal 4: Give host municipalities more input into water bottling decisions

Throughout the current moratorium, the ministry has heard from local municipalities that they would like to have a say as to whether a water bottling facility can be established within their area.

### Proposed Action

#### **Require water bottling companies to report whether they have support from the host municipality when applying for a new or expanded water taking**

The ministry is proposing to amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (Ontario Regulation 387/04) to require water bottling companies to report whether they have support from the host municipality when applying for a Permit to Take Water for a new water taking or increased amount of water. The “host municipality” would be considered the single-tier or lower-tier municipality where the proposed water taking is located.

The regulation would specify the grounds on which a host municipality could refuse to support a proposed water taking, for example, related to concerns about its anticipated impacts to:

- aquatic ecosystems;
- water availability, including current or future municipal water supply needs; or
- water quality.

If the host municipality supports the proposed water taking, the application should include the municipal resolution. If the host municipality does not support the proposed water taking, the host municipality would be required to indicate its reasons for not supporting the application.

Obtaining support from the host municipality would be in addition to any other requirements or conditions that the ministry might have in deciding whether to issue a Permit to Take Water. This includes any requirements associated with meeting the Crown’s duty to consult Indigenous communities.

The requirement to obtain support from the host municipality would apply to companies that are proposing a new or increased water taking for the purpose of producing bottled water. It would be limited to water bottling companies that have total maximum permitted daily water takings – cumulatively within the host municipality, including currently authorized and proposed amounts – of greater than 379,000 litres per day. Companies proposing to take water

below this threshold would not be required to indicate whether there is support from the host municipality in order to apply for a permit. The requirement would also not apply to:

- A facility that needs to renew an existing permit for the same or lower permitted volume, the same purpose and the same location of water taking
- A water bottling company that requires a short-term permit to conduct a pumping test
- A water bottling facility that gets its water from a municipal water supply
- A facility that is proposing a water taking within an unorganized territory (i.e., an area with no local municipality)

### **Discussion Questions**

Let us know your thoughts on the discussion questions below.

1. Do you support the proposal to require water bottling companies to seek support from their host municipality when applying for a Permit to Take Water? Why or why not?

## Summary of Proposed Actions

Goal	Proposed Actions	How
1	Establish priorities of water use in the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation	Amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04)
1	Provide guidance on applying priorities of water use	Guidance to be developed
2	Add authority in regulation to manage water takings on an area basis	Amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04)
2	Update existing guidance for managing water takings on an area basis	Guidance to be developed
2	Develop additional guidance for managing water takings in drought conditions	Guidance to be developed
2	Replacing high use watershed maps and prohibitions in the regulation	Amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04)
3	Enable sharing of water quantity data	Amend Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04) and Environmental Activity Sector Registry (EASR) - Water Taking Regulation (O. Reg. 63/16)
3	Enhance access to water quantity data	<p>Build dedicated public-facing online resource</p> <p>Review, update existing and develop new water quantity data sets</p> <p>Regularly communicate information on the state of water resources in Ontario and management programs via the ministry's water quantity online resource</p>
4	Require water bottling companies to report whether they have support from the host municipality when applying for a new or expanded water taking	Amend the Water Taking and Transfer Regulation (O. Reg. 387/04)

## We Want to Hear From You

You are invited to submit your comments to this proposal online through the Environmental Registry website: <https://ero.ontario.ca/>. Search by registry number 019-1340.

You can also send your comments by email to:

Email: [waterpolicy@ontario.ca](mailto:waterpolicy@ontario.ca)

The public comment period will close on August 2, 2020. We will review and consider all the comments that we receive in response to the proposal paper through the Environmental Registry and the Ontario Regulatory Registry, via email and from our meetings with stakeholders and Indigenous communities. Based on feedback received, we will make decisions about our next steps in enhancing water quantity management in Ontario.

We intend to engage with the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous communities and organizations on the development of future guidance to support the implementation of these proposed actions.

## Find Out More About How Water Resources are Managed in Ontario

To learn more about the Ontario laws and regulations mentioned in this proposal paper and other legislation concerning water management, protection and conservation in Ontario, please visit Service Ontario e-Laws: [www.ontario.ca/laws](http://www.ontario.ca/laws).

For more information on the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and its programs, visit: [www.ontario.ca/environment](http://www.ontario.ca/environment).