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Charlottetown asking for special treatment under water act

City says legislation needs to protect huge demands, challenges put on its water resources

Nigel Armstrong | Posted: Oct. 8, 2015, midnight | Updated: Sept. 30, 2017, 3:02 a.m. | 7 Min Read



["Coun. Eddie Rice, chair of Charlottetown's Water and Sewer Utility committee, says the city may have to appropriate some of the land its needs for its sewer separation project."]

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The draw on Charlottetown's water system is huge, far beyond the needs of just residents, so a new water act must recognize that fact, the city says.

It made a presentation on the opening day of cross-Island hearings for a proposed new water act, [outlining ten major points](#) for the Environment Advisory Committee to consider when drafting the act.

"On any given day the city becomes host to a significant portion of the Island's population," said Councillor Edward Rice, chair of the city's water and sewer utility committee in press release after he made the presentation to the committee.

"In addition to our population of 34,000, we provide essential services of fire protection, sanitary waste management and safe water for all islanders through health care facilities, seniors' homes, the university, the college and, of course, every household and business in the capital," said Rice.

Climate change, failing infrastructure and more people moving to the city all contribute to the water management challenge, he said.

Rice said that conservation measures, like water metering, are showing significant beneficial decline on the yearly draw from the city's water supply.

The 10 points he would like to see in the water act include a way to protect well fields to keep the supply safe, including some form of protection for future well fields.

Other priorities for the new water act, said Rice, include money to support water conservation and rainwater harvesting technology, better regulations for stormwater management, and emphasis on watershed protection and management in both urban and suburban parts of the province.

Charlottetown uses water from thirteen wells in three wellfields located within the Winter River watershed. That water source is shared with other communities

where residents use private wells.

"Charlottetown and Winter River residents depend on this watershed for clean and adequate water supply," said Rice.

There are also farms and aquaculture operations outside the city that require clean water from that same watershed, he said.

Faced with all the demand for water, the city is in the process of developing five new wells plus a second water supply.

"Miltonvale well field will help ease the strain on the Winter River watershed," said Rice.

It will, however, only be a brief respite as the demands will continue to grow so yet more well fields will be needed, he said.

In addition, a groundwater management plan is being developed to better balance groundwater extraction rates compared with the catchment areas for each well field to help streams flow better in the Winter River zone, the press release says.

For more information on the City's well field project, Winter River Watershed, the City's conservation efforts or other related programs such as the residential water meter program, visit: www.charlottetown.ca/waterutility.php.

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10 Points for Water Act

The City of Charlottetown submitted the following ten-point summary of what will soon be a larger written submission to the Environment Advisory Committee now holding hearings across P.E.I.

We are committed to sustainable development and to finding ways to improve how we operate to benefit the community and the environment. We have therefore prepared the following 10-point submission for the Water Act panel and ask that these points be considered when developing the Act.

- P.E.I. relies exclusively on groundwater for our drinking water supplies. The Charlottetown Water & Sewer Utility recognizes first-hand the significant value of wellfield protection in ensuring a safe and reliable supply of water to the people of Charlottetown and of P.E.I. The Water Act should mandate wellfield protection and groundwater management plans and provide regulations supporting both. The Act must recognize the significant impact unregulated non-point source pollution has on degrading water, particularly with nutrients, bacteria and sediment.
- We must look ahead to the future to ensure that we are protecting our greatest water assets before they become threatened. Future wellfields and headwaters of majority tributaries need to be identified and proactively protected against development encroachment and contamination threats. Land adjacent to these sites must serve as greenbelts and uses should be restricted to those that do not pose a potential hazard in the long-term view.
- The City has made significant water conservation efforts in the past number of years. The Water Act should support water conservation efforts in order to ensure that resources are used to their fullest potential and that waste is minimized. Regulations should enforce the use of water efficient fixtures throughout the Province and mandate maximum water loss targets for water distribution systems.
- In a further effort to ensure water efficiency, the Water Act should call for changes in the Province's regulatory framework that will support water reuse and rainwater harvesting technology. This will ensure that these innovative approaches are accessible and encouraged at all development scales and ensure public safety. Using our existing resources to their fullest potential is an essential component of managing water quantity.

- The City fully supports a harmonized regulatory framework that integrates federal and provincial perspectives in all areas of water and waste water management. By streamlining legislation the Act could increase the ease of navigating regulations and improve the Province's administration ability.
- The City of Charlottetown recognizes that there are costs including environmental impacts associated with the provision of water and sanitary services. However, the benefits of water and sanitary services are significant and should be considered when determining water resource allocation. The City must be considered a priority user of groundwater on PEI.
- While there is great value to the watershed management model that has been in practice on PEI, it is imperative that the Act also recognize the interconnectedness of those watersheds. Groundwater and contaminants can travel through watershed boundaries and practices in one watershed can have an impact on those nearby. The Act must consider this factor when developing a management model.
- Watershed management on an island-wide basis has made significant strides in the past 10 years with the establishment of the Watershed Alliance and the provincial ALUS program. The City would like to see more emphasis on watershed protection and management in urban and suburban parts of the province with the understanding that development poses unique challenges that are different in nature from agricultural impacts. Municipalities require support in ensuring that appropriate development standards are in place and that there are sufficient resources allocated to ensure that standards are followed.
- The Water Act should provide or lead to the development of resources and guidelines for municipalities when it comes to designing infrastructure projects that impact water resources. The Province of PEI should be setting an example for municipalities to follow for stream crossings, culverts, storm ditches and other infrastructure projects when it comes to design and low impact implementation.
- The Water Act should recognize the need to manage stormwater differently and support more local experimentation of alternative forms of storm water management, including green roofs, rain barrels, vegetated swales, pervious pavement and others.

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