



Guelph Water Supply Master Plan – Phase 1

Community engagement summary, October 2020

The City of Guelph (City) is updating its 2014 Council-approved Water Supply Master Plan to define how Guelph will continue to respectfully access a sustainable supply of water — to meet residential, industrial, commercial and institutional demands — to the year 2051 (as of August 2020, Ontario extended the planning horizon from 2041 to 2051 in A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe). The Water Supply Master Plan update follows the requirements of Phases 1 and 2 of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment and will be co-ordinated with the City's future Official Plan update.

Reviewing the existing water supply system is an opportunity to discuss with Guelph and the surrounding communities how best to work with this vital supply so that the City continues to provide a responsible level of service.

Community input is an essential part of the Water Supply Master Plan update process. People care about where their water comes from, and they want to see a safe and sustainable supply maintained for present and future generations.

Phase 1 overview

Topics covered and presented to the community during Phase 1 (initial engagement (Fall 2019 to March 2020) included

- an overview of why the Water Supply Master Plan is being updated, including the opportunities and challenges that the Water Supply Master Plan will address;
- an overview of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process, including a timeline of major milestones;





- the Water Supply Master Plan update steps including forecasting of future population and water needs, assessment of existing water supply capacity, and development and evaluation of water supply alternatives;
- the personhood of water as it is understood in the worldview of Indigenous Peoples residing in the Guelph area;
- a closer look at Guelph’s current groundwater supply system;
- estimates of our future water supply requirements – i.e., how Guelph’s population is expected to grow by 2041¹ and the water supply it will need;
- challenges related to the City’s water supply, including water security, climate change and extreme weather events, contaminated sites and surface water quantity and quality;
- proposed water supply alternative solutions being considered and / or updated, including demand management / efficiency programs, groundwater sources in and outside of the city, local surface water sources, and do nothing;
- evaluation criteria and how the proposed alternative solutions will be evaluated, including public health and safety, natural environment, social and cultural (including archaeological) resources, economic and financial considerations, legal / jurisdictional considerations and technological considerations; and
- how the community can get involved and contribute to the Water Supply Master Plan update.

¹ In August 2020 (after Phase 1 engagement was complete), the Province of Ontario released Amendment 1 to A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe that extended the planning horizon in the Plan from 2041 to 2051. The WSMP update will adopt this change and consider growth and associated water supply requirements to 2051.





How we engaged

Phase 1 engagement included

- newspaper advertising and electronic mailings to inform people about the start of the Water Supply Master Plan update and the first community open house;
- a [project website](#) to provide useful information, including links to the previous 2014 Water Supply Master Plan update, contact information and invitations to online and in-person engagement opportunities;
- [online engagement](#) through Have Your Say Guelph, linked through the project website and promoted via the electronic mailing list, social media and a monthly Have Your Say newsletter;
- establishment of an inclusive and diverse Community Liaison Group to advise and provide feedback to the project team throughout the process;
- a municipal and agency workshop to provide crucial inputs from a government and approval agency perspective;
- one community open house (with two time slots) to introduce the Water Supply Master Plan update, giving community members an opportunity to discuss the project with a unique knowledge holder from the project Community Liaison Group and water specialists on the project team, and provide comments;
- one stakeholder meeting with Guelph Wellington Development Association and Guelph and District Home Builder's Association; and
- co-ordination with other related master plan updates (i.e., Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan, Wastewater and Biosolids Master Plan, Stormwater Master Plan and the Municipal Comprehensive Review / Official Plan Update).





What we heard

Guided by a series of engagement questions, the community provided their input to the project. Key themes that emerged from the feedback included

- prioritizing conservation;
- protecting the natural environment;
- managing growth and development;
- controlling groundwater impacts from large water users;
- monitoring emerging contaminants;
- limiting impacts to aquatic and terrestrial wildlife; and
- valuing the agency of water

Detailed feedback on the draft problem and opportunity statement

- **Water supply:**
It was suggested that groundwater cannot be controlled or developed, therefore, the word 'develop' should be removed from the statement or rephrase to water supply infrastructure being developed. Another suggestion was to focus on adequate water supply (without summer restrictions) before population growth.
- **Conservation:**
Individuals noted that watershed protection and conservation efforts should be the main priorities.
- **Capacity and growth:**
Concerns were expressed regarding 2041 as too short of a planning horizon and to first determine the future capacity of water supply before determining how to limit growth.
- **Aquifer recharge:**
One comment suggested recharging aquifers with wetlands, stormwater and treated wastewater.
- **Infrastructure:**
One comment suggested exploring costs of more rapidly upgrading





infrastructure to reduce system losses, and another comment suggested building a pipe to a lake.

- **Wastewater:**

One comment suggested including wastewater disposal as part of the Water Supply Master Plan process.

- **Other:**

Several respondents agreed with the draft problem and opportunity statement. One comment suggested declaring that water-taking is not an approved land use.

Detailed feedback on proposed alternative solutions

- **Demand management / efficiency programs:**

A few respondents questioned the need for growth and suggested limiting population increase and challenging growth targets. One respondent suggested revising the 2016 Water Efficiency Strategy to better reflect extreme weather events, infrastructure deficiencies and contamination. Another respondent would like to see more water conservation initiatives and increasing the use of grey water for residential, commercial and industrial water users.

- **Groundwater sources in and outside of city:**

The majority of comments related to groundwater were about Nestle and the impacts of water extraction. One respondent suggested quantifying the impact of Nestle on the water supply to show financial implications for residents.

- **Local surface water sources:**

There was one suggestion to look at potential sources of water outside of the watershed.

- **Other:**

Other proposed alternative solutions included contamination risk management, using stormwater and wastewater to help aquifer restoration, establishing urban rooftop water collection systems and considering how to adapt in the case of extreme floods. Three respondents agreed with the proposed alternative solutions.





Detailed feedback on evaluation criteria

- **Natural environment:**
Comments related to the natural environment include prioritizing the protection of the environment above all else, considering how Clair-Maltby is a recharge area and how development in this area will impact water availability and recharge, and a request to see a breakdown of how any Water Supply Master Plan projects would impact aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.
- **Economic and financial considerations:**
There were a range of comments related to economic and financial considerations, including the potential creation of local jobs, socio-economic benefits from managing groundwater and forestry and the economic impacts of current and future scenarios of not having water. One respondent asked who will pay for new water supply and treatment considering new residential developments, and another respondent asked how much it will cost to bring water to Guelph in 2041 if there isn't enough local supply.
- **Additional considerations:**
One respondent suggested listening to and understanding Indigenous People's approach to water. Another respondent added the ability to respond to unpredictable climate events as an important consideration.
- **Other:**
One respondent suggested considering long-term groundwater and surface water impacts of any new facility – both during operation and after being closed. Two respondents agreed with the evaluation criteria.

Engaging with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples living in Guelph

There are Indigenous Peoples—First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples – living in Guelph who are working with the City and contributing in the development of the Water Supply Master Plan update. Specifically, through the





Community Liaison Group, Indigenous Peoples shared their perspectives on the spirit of water and the importance of respecting the agency of water. This involved conversations during the first Community Liaison Group meeting; contribution at the first open house where Indigenous knowledge on water relations was shared with members of the public; and on-going dialogue with the Water Supply Master Plan project team around ways the relationships can be enhanced through working with the diversity of local Indigenous voices, on Water Supply Master Plan updates and other water-related projects and initiatives.

Intentions are to continue working and learning together. This will continue into Phase 2 of the project.

Next Steps

Phase 2 engagement is tentatively planned for early 2021 and will focus on an in-depth analysis of

- the assessment of existing water well performance, maximum capacity and potential constraints for each water supply source;
- a comparison of existing capacity with water demand projections; and
- a preliminary evaluation of the water supply alternatives against the evaluation criteria.

Public and agency input will be focused on the preferred alternatives based off the preliminary evaluation. After input is received, a Water Supply Master Plan report will be drafted and will include an implementation strategy for a water supply plan that meets the future needs of the community, including options with estimated timelines and budget. Once the report is drafted, council and the public will have an opportunity for review before the report will be finalized.

