

**Urban Water Management Knowledge Cluster
Held at CIELAP September 28, 2006**

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The main topics of discussion were regarding the following issues:

- Water Pricing
- Demand management and conservation
- Drinking water quality
- Storm water management
- Bottled water
- Other topics of discussion

Water Pricing

- We have not been paying enough for water. The big question is – what is the right price?
- For Toronto, what does that mean? Operating costs never included the costs of replacing assets.
- Municipalities do not want to touch this issue – it is too expensive and it will open a can of worms because the public does not want to pay.
- Discussion regarding Sewage Act and why nobody wants to touch this topic. Pumping water and pumping sewage is the number one use of electricity in municipalities therefore very expensive. Ontario was once using Model Sewer Use bylaw. A bylaw combined with MISA would have made a HUGE difference.
- As an education tool do we need to tell people what is happening with infrastructure so that they will understand the need for policy change and the introduction of fees?

Demand Management and Conservation

- When looking at demand management, we need to separate residential, commercial, and government water usage.
- A major problem is that Canadians feel that they have unlimited water at their disposal.
- The difference between water demand in the summer and winter is quite significant. The price then also needs to reflect the fact that treatment plants need to be built for summer capacity.
- It would be quite useful to scope out what other jurisdictions are doing with regards to this problem.
- Polis project is doing something on this topic. Try not to replicate.

Drinking Water Quality

- Drinking water quality – municipal drinking water is extensively tested (much more than bottled water).
- There is always the possibility to include more chemicals, etc... in the testing. Toronto tests for more contaminants than they're required to test for.
- There is currently no testing for endocrine disrupting substances.
- Bottled water is currently regulated under food rather than water. Therefore regulation for municipal water is through the province; regulation for bottled water is through the federal government.

Storm water Management

- Our inability to manage storm water and runoff from rain is costing us billions in both infrastructure and environmental costs.
- In Ontario, storm water management consists only of voluntary guidelines and a mishmash of overlapping acts. While some municipalities are moving ahead, most limit their wet-weather management to ponds, because there is no requirement for stricter watershed protection.
- The Clean Water Act passed by the province to protect water quality does not include the effects of storm water. There are also few development controls in Ontario's Planning Act.
- No incentives for the homeowners and developers to employ low-impact development techniques that reduce harmful runoff. Germany has mandatory storm water regulations. Ontario has just stepped over the edge on this.
- Next 5 – 10 years will see a great increase in storm water utilities. Everyone felt that CIELAP should pursue research on storm water management– this could lead to comprehensive strategy (talk to Bryan and Kevin about this idea).

Bottled Water

- Bottled water companies take huge amounts of water from rural springs and municipal supplies - and paying next to nothing to do it.
- In Ontario, companies can withdraw up to 50,000 liters from surface or groundwater sources per day without approval from the Ministry of the Environment.
- In Canada, bottled water consumption is big business. In fact, municipal tap water is more strictly regulated. Bottled water is not covered under Ontario's Safe Drinking Water Act. Apart from arsenic and lead, current regulations lack specific detailed parameters for chemical and radiological contaminants. In Canada, no license is required to sell bottled water. Responsibility for microbial testing lies with manufacturers. It's a myth that bottled water is necessarily better BUT it's up to municipalities to educate people.

Other topics of discussion

- Places to Grow Act talks about population growth but does not look at how people are going to get all of their water.
- You need both mitigation and treatment. Source Protection Plan plays an immense role in water quality.

- Continued implication of non-point pollution; limitations of groundwater – leads to demand increase of infrastructure – longer pipes.
- Sprawl is facilitated by infrastructure.
- Decisions are made with no hydro geological science
- Why don't we have a comprehensive land-use framework that ties into water...? CAs should feed into this... we need a comprehensive, holistic approach.
- We don't have a clean water act – the US does, though, and has since the 1970s...
- Ontario is mired in point-source pollution but non-point source is the biggest source of pollution
- No legislation to require waste water treatment plants to do nitrification... although CEPA does attempt to tackle this problem.
- Protection and Restoration of our water – leave the idea of “water quality” out – people think of water quality as drinking water... (end-of-pipe rather than source water protection)...Clean Water Act is a great step in the right direction.
- Road salts are exempt from the Water Protection Act – it's a financial issue. No one is willing to take the financial hit.

General Thoughts:

Suggestion – stay away from looking at Global Warming and Climate Change. Also from bottled water issue.

There is a great paper re: footprint (ecological cost of building out of California) deals with a diversity of issues...

The suggestion is that minutes go out; ideas develop and once we have an idea together we can discuss funding options.