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Public Consultation Centre - Comments and Questions

A Public Consultation Centre (PCC) was held on April 11, 2024, to present and engage on the preliminary preferred alternatives for the Regional Water Supply Servicing Master Plan. The format of the PCC was a drop-in centre with display panels. Project team members including Prince Edward County staff and members of the consultant team, CIMA+, were available to speak one-on-one with the public. 60 people signed the attendance sheet, 7 comment sheets were received. A variety of questions and comments were received both during and after the PCC. Questions and comments alike have below.

1. **Can the cost of the projects be amortized over 40-50 years to offset costs to the water users? This would buy time until the developments have been completely contributed their share of the money towards the water projects.**

The municipality has been obtaining debt financing through the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation (OILC) for the majority of our debt servicing as they have historically offered the best rates and terms. The maximum terms provided by OILC are a 30-year term. With respect to water and wastewater infrastructure we would maximize where possible the terms available to us to make the payments out over a longer term. With the costs associated with the water and wastewater works we will be looking at other lending sources such as the Canada Infrastructure Bank and would ensure that we continue to maximize amortization periods.

2. **How can I have input into the design/appearance of the Regional Water Treatment Plant in Wellington? I am a neighbour and very concerned about how it will affect my enjoyment of my property.**

The municipality will host a Public Information Centre (PIC) during the detailed design phase to provide the public with an opportunity to see the proposed designs and site plans and provide feedback.

3. **Why is the Director of Finance recommending moving forward with the tender of the design phase for a Regional Water Plant before the Class Environmental Assessment's (EA) for the Wellington Water/Wastewater plants and the Picton and Regional Water Supply Master Plan EA's reports are finalized, and without the 30-day public commenting period as required under Phase 4 of the MCEA (COTW April 25/24)?**

Staff recommended moving forward with the procurement phase for the detailed design of a new regional water plant so that the municipality would be eligible for the Housing Enabling Water System Fund. The funding is conditional on the ability to move forward with either detailed design or construction by September 2024. Should the province approve the municipality's application, Council would be required to approve entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement with the province before accepting any funding. By approving the motion from Committee, Council will be providing staff with the authority to move forward with the procurement process only for the detailed design of the water and wastewater plants, not construction. Given the expected dollar value of this design work, the Purchasing By-law will require staff to bring this procurement award back to Council for its approval.

4. **How does the Regional Water Servicing Strategy provide ongoing servicing in a fiscally responsible manner? The financial model to support the initial capital outlay is dependent upon growth and developer contributions - how has this been risk tested to ensure the near term and long term forecasted growth and developed**

revenue (75% of costs) is realistic, and what is the fallback position for servicing debt and capital repayment should the annual projected revenues not be realized?

Prior to establishing an Area Specific Development Charge for Wellington to support the growth-related infrastructure contemplated by the Wellington Master Servicing Plan, the municipality-imposed capital connection charges under the Municipal Act. For any development outside of Wellington (for example, Picton), the municipality will use these funds currently held in reserves to make the debt payments. The municipality will review the Development Charges framework this fall once the Picton Master Servicing Plan (MSP) is completed in order to develop the funding strategy to allow growth to adequately pay for the growth contemplated by the Picton MSP.

5. **Should a regional water supply be implemented and the Picton WTP decommissioned what is the plan should there be a major break or contamination in the main water supply shutting down or affecting the entire system?**

If the water supply or water treatment plant needed to be shutdown for planned or unplanned repairs, the system would continue to operate off the water storage reservoirs located in Wellington, Bloomfield and Picton. During the detailed design phase twinned transmission mains would be evaluated as well as accessible valves and isolation points along the transmission main to improve serviceability and facilitate repairs.

6. **The June 6, 2023 Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) decision only exempted the Wellington water/wastewater plant capital costs from contributing to the municipalities Annual Repayment Limit (ARLU) threshold (due to promised front end Development Charges which have not yet been received) - not the additional projected costs for a Regional Water Supply (another $100M). How will these additional costs/future debt for the Regional capital costs impact the ARLU?**

Like all major capital works, there are phases to work through. With the additional costs and the change to a regional water plant as recommended in the Regional Water Supply Servicing Master Plan, the Development Charge background work this fall will also consider these increased costs and change in project scope for the current Wellington-area specific Development Charge. Prior to the next water rate study and after a review of the Development Charge framework to ensure growth pays for growth-related infrastructure, the municipality will determine the net impact on the municipality's Annual Repayment Limit and any subsequent actions required as part of the multi-year budget to be presented in December 2025.

7. **On Slide 21, have you done computer water distribution models to determine if the architecture as illustrated will provide sufficient water pressure and flows to the eastern extremities of Picton such as to the new Tulip Estates development proposed at Bridge Street? What booster stations are needed and have their costs been factored in?**

Yes, a booster pumping station will be required as part of the transmission main which has been proposed to be located at the intersection of the Millennium Trail and County Road 1 (Sandy Hook Road). The cost of this booster station has been included in the estimated cost of the transmission main. If any other local booster pumping stations are needed in Picton that will be established through the Picton Master Servicing Plan.

8. **On Slide 24, titled "System #5 – Picton/Bloomfield, Evaluation Results", the Harvey-ball scoring would indicate a better score for "Alternative 1: Provide a new water system in Picton" rather than "Alternative 3: Obtain all Water from new Wellington Regional WTP'. Why then have you put Alternative 3 as the preferred option? Is it because the annual Operations and maintenance costs are $250K less? If so, have you considered installing SCADA systems in remote water plants so that it can be managed centrally from one location and only have to station operators when required rather than regularly. Is it not possible to reduce the cost of operations and maintenance?**

Alternative #3 was the highest scoring option, not Alternative #1. Please review the slides available on the municipal website (link below). All municipal water systems do in fact have SCADA systems that allow Water Operators to monitor these systems remotely and also control some equipment and processes remotely.

https://www.thecounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PRES-FINAL-Regional-MP-FINAL.pdf

9. **On Slide 11, titled "Picton/Bloomfield and Wellington Population Basis" the population growth chart shows the growth rate over 25 years starting from 2021, with end-state in 2047. Yet, your proposals for building the WTP is for the full capacity for the 25 years from the start. Yet, municipalities only need to demonstrate that that they have growth capacities for 5 years, would it not be possible to design & build the WTP in increments of 5 - 10 years? Ie. build a plant that will satisfy growth to 2030, 2035, then 2040 and 2045…and so on. That way, it may be more expensive over the long run but we will not be expending money today on capacity we will use 25 years from now.**

Water treatment plants are typically designed in 20-year increments as they are large infrastructure projects that require several years of design and construction. Designing, tendering and constructing a facility of this nature in five-year increments would not be practical or cost effective. The preferred technology (membrane filtration) selected for the Wellington water plant is modular in nature and will offer the opportunity during detailed design to mitigate growth risk through phasing of key equipment.

10. **Why was water conservation not included in review of these systems (particularly Ameliasburgh where the source suffers from drought impact)?**

Reducing water demands or water conservation measures were considered during the early stages of this Master Plan. Please refer to the PCC#1 information boards available on the municipal website (link below). This strategy was not carried for detailed evaluations as the overall plans for growth in the municipality cannot be met through this strategy. For Ameliasburg, water conservation measures are utilized at times during drought years. However, the existing facility has the capacity to service the existing and future populations so no upgrades were recommended or necessary.

https://www.thecounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FINAL-PRES-Regional-MP-PCC1.pdf

11. **Not convinced the Picton Water Plant is as bad as stated. There have been zero compliance issues here based on annual reports. There are no water quantity issues with the Bay of Quinte (connected to Great Lakes) which seems to be reported as an issue for Picton.**

The Picton water plant is nearly 100 years old and is in overall poor condition. Yes, the plant is currently operating within compliance but the municipality needs to take the necessary steps to ensure that trend is carried into the future. If we begin to fall out of compliance its too late to begin planning for a new facility.

Water quantity is not the concern regarding Picton Bay but rather water quality. Quinte Conservation classified this Intake Protection Zone (IPZ) as very vunerable to pollution and contamination. IPZ scores for Picton Bay are 10, 9, 8 and 6 (10 being the worst possible score). The water quality in Picton Bay is deteriorating. There is an increase in organics and algae in the water, which is causing an increase in disinfection by-products. There are sources of stormwater runoff, the wastewater treatment plant outfall and various recreational activities to contend with. The 2014 intake replacement Municipal Class Environmental Assessment also identified heavy metals in the sediment. The water quality was also identified to deteriorate with specific winds. Although a preferred location was identified in the 2014 intake Municipal Class Environmental Assessment, the study could not guarantee the water quality would be improved even with a significant extension of the intake.

12. **The population projections for Picton are not realistic. This is hugely important and needs to be reviewed. There have been developments approved in Picton for years that have never came to fruition. With all the building in the County that occurred over recent past our population never seems to increase that much. More work on this needed.**

Watson and Associates, the consulting firm that prepared the projections, affirmed the numbers in October 2023. Council directed the municipality to have a third-party peer review of the study. Several efforts were made from direct assignments to open RFP process and there were no firms willing and/or able to conduct the peer review assignment. Council directed staff to engage further with the Municipal Audit Committee on the matter.

13. **Water Rates are hugely important. Current users pay some of the highest rates in Canada. The last study on rates indicated we needed more users to help pay for the system. This has happened but our water rates continually increase by the sounds of this current plan the water rates are leading skyward! Something needs to be done!**

The purpose of this Regional Master Plan to find efficiencies and possible improvements in the existing water systems in an effort to better manage water rates.

14. **The table on slide 10 refers to 2011 numbers. I would have thought that the most recently submitted report should have been for the year 2023, since we both knew O. Reg 170 requires annual reports. The 2023 numbers should have been used in that slide since they reflect the most current reality.**

The table on slide 10 was for 2021 conditions and the future buildout conditions. The 2021 conditions were used to develop the design basis with the up to date census data. For the smaller systems (i.e. Ameliasburgh), standard consumption rates are used to account for inherent variability with a smaller user base. For the larger systems (i.e. Picton and Wellington), the 2021 water demands and per capita flows are used as baseline while future water demands are added using standard consumption rates. Additionally, there is consideration given to the 5-year historical period, hence the year-to-year variation does not materially change the overall planning period and future planning conditions.

15. **The table on slide 10 also refers to average day flow, maximum day flow, and maximum hour flow. My understanding of those terms is that maximum day flow refers to the output from the treatment plant into the distribution system. Maximum hour is only relevant when there is no storage in the system. Clearwell storage, together with ground storage reservoirs and elevated tanks are designed to meet system demands beyond maximum day.**

You are correct in that Peak Hour is typically used for facility size and capacity decision making when no storage is available. However, peak hour demand is still useful information when evaluating water distribution systems.

16. **How has the seasonal nature of our population been accounted for? Water demand must go down considerably in the winter.**

The season nature of the population is accounted for in the historical design basis. This includes a review of the per capita flowrates and the max day factors (i.e. higher use summer periods). The population projections used in this Master Plan include a seasonal component.

17. **For a system sized for such a significant population, would there not be concerns about water quality if it remains stagnant, with less draw overall?**

The transmission main and storage do increase water age compared to a local water plant in Picton. The main concern with water age is disinfection by-products and maintaining a chlorine residual. The Wellington water source and preferred treatment plant technology reduces the risk of disinfection by-products and re-chlorination will be provided in Picton to maintain secondary disinfection and desired chlorine levels.

18. **What is still to be completed for the Class C Environmental Assessment of the new Wellington Water Treatment Plant. What is the timeline for that to happen? What is the explanation for incomplete and missing documentation of this project on the County website. Note: The information available to residents on county.ca website, under Special Projects has the following documents regarding the required 2 PCC presentations. June 28/23 - 1) Copies of the display panels and 2) the report to summarize the response to all questions that were submitted. August 31/23 -1) Copies of the display panels and 2) the video taken of the public meeting held concurrently with the PCC. There is no report answering the questions that were raised either when residents were looking at the panels, nor when they asked the questions (recorded on video) during the simultaneously held public meeting. It appears the Class C EA report is far from complete. The expectations were that the process involved not only two PCCs both with questions submitted and 2 reports following to answer questions raised but also a final report that would go to Council. Only at the completion of these 2 PCC, 2 reports responding to the questions and the approval of the final report would the WTP project then move to the Design phase.**

For the Wellington Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Municipal Class EA Schedule C the following items still need to be completed, finalize the Environmental Study Report (ESR), issue the Notice of Study Completion and place the ESR on the public record for the 30-day comment period. We expect this to happen within Q2 of 2024. Only one PCC was held for this Schedule C Class EA which is what is required under the Municipal Class EA planning process. This WTP Schedule C Class EA completes Phases 3 and 4 of the Class EA process. Please note, two PCCs would have been held as part of the Wellington Master Servicing Plan (MSP) which completed Phases 1 and 2 of the Class EA process. The public meeting held on August 31, 2023 in Wellington was intended to give residents a better understanding of the overall Class EA process, Wellington MSP and Development Charges. This meeting was not part of the WTP Schedule C Class EA but rather a background information session as some residents expressed confusion on the status of Wellington infrastructure plans. Questions at this meeting were answered in real time and can be watched on the YouTube video if you wish (link below).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixrFkhTE704&t=3639s

19. **The new Wellington Water Plant and the Regional Water Servicing projects are interrelated and interdependent. What is the explanation for the separation as two separate projects?**

The Regional Water Supply Servicing Master Plan is a high-level review of all water systems in the County and completes Phases 1 and 2 of the Class EA process. The Wellington WTP Schedule C is a detailed evaluation specifically of the Wellington WTP which completes Phases 3 and 4 of the Class EA process. Some recommendations from the Regional Master Plan may influence the WTP Schedule C Class EA so they were completed concurrently.

20. **Are options now being reconsidered to build the new Wellington WTP building in staged phases over this multiyear program? This regional program is by far the most massive, expensive and long-term project ever undertaken by the County. This raises serious questions whether the assumption that digging up the largest foot print and building the largest building right at the beginning of this project is a valid assumption. It has become apparent already that the County is having to take on debt and the ensuing interest costs as they try to manage the cost recovery side of parts of this complex waterworks expansion. Building the WTP in phased stages of perhaps 10 years could be beneficial in saving interest costs. Isn't that worth considering now along with the community benefits of the open space and community use?**

The regional water plant will incorporate a phasing plan and options will be reviewed in preliminary design to reduce the impact on greenspace. The size and site plan is for buildout and to ensure the facility fits on the site, however, phasing will be reviewed during preliminary design. Typically, site plans and building renderings are available at the 30% detailed design stage. This is intended to be made available to the public. The regional water plant will be constructed in phases. WTPs are typically designed in 20-year increments as they are large infrastructure projects that require several years for design and construction. The technologies selected in the Wellington WTP Schedule C Class EA are modular in nature and will offer opportunity in detailed design to mitigate growth risk through phasing of key equipment.