

# SAMPLE COMMITTEE REPORT

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TO **Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment Committee**

SERVICE AREA Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment  
DATE March 19, 2012

**SUBJECT Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement for a Ontario Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network**

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## SUMMARY

### **Purpose of Report:**

To inform Council of Ontario's new Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network and to seek Council's endorsement regarding next steps.

### **Council Action:**

To authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the agreement, including future amendments, with the Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network (OnWARN).

## RECOMMENDATION

"THAT the Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment report dated March 19, 2012 entitled Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement for a Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network ("Agreement") be received;

AND THAT Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute the Agreement, including future amendments, with the Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network (OnWARN), subject to the satisfaction of the Executive Director of Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment and the City Solicitor."

## BACKGROUND

The Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network ("OnWARN") is a voluntary network of utilities helping other utilities to respond to and recover from emergencies. It matches specialized water/wastewater utility resources to specific needs during an emergency to aid in quickly locating emergency equipment and trained personnel.

OnWARN is important because it establishes agreement and protocols in advance to access resources and knowledgeable personnel in water & wastewater systems through its mutual aid and assistance agreement; and doesn't require the declaration of an emergency to access these.

OnWARN also provides a forum for establishing and maintaining emergency contacts, and can help facilitate water / wastewater emergency training.

## **REPORT**

Recognizing the significant benefit of joining OnWARN and improving emergency preparedness for the City's Water and Wastewater Services; staff are seeking Council's authorization for the Mayor and Clerk to execute the Agreement (see Appendix "A"), including future amendments, with the Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network (OnWARN), subject to the satisfaction of the Executive Director of Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment and the City Solicitor.

## **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement for a Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network ("Agreement") aids the City to meet Strategic Objective 6.3, i.e. "A safe reliable local water supply".

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

While there is no cost to join OnWARN, there may be financial implications related to keeping an up-to-date inventory of the City's Water and Wastewater resources available to access by members of OnWARN. All financial implications relating to the Agreement have been accounted for in the approved 2012 Water and Wastewater Budgets.

## **DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION**

Corporate & Human Resources - Legal Services,  
Emergency Services,  
Planning & Building, Engineering and Environment - Water Services and  
Wastewater Services

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Through its Summary Water Services Reports to Council, Water Services will provide updates regarding its participation in OnWARN.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A - Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement for a Ontario Water / Wastewater Agency Response Network (OnWARN)

**To:** Chair and Members  
Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System Board of Management

**From:** John Braam, P.Eng.  
Director of Water & City Engineer

**Meeting Date:** June 9, 2011

**Subject:** Ontario Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Management for the Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System **ENDORSE** the creation and development of a Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network for Ontario, and receive this report for information.

## DISCUSSION

In the last decade, various water/wastewater agency response network (WARN) programs have been implemented or are being developed in each state of the United States of America (USA), as well as the Province of Alberta. The program is premised on the principle of “*Utilities helping Utilities*”, and designed as a type of voluntary mutual-aid between water and wastewater utilities in a region. The program is being coordinated in the USA through the American Water Works Association (AWWA).

Many municipalities in Ontario have specific mutual aid agreements between them and a neighbouring municipality for fire fighting assistance, and there may be an informal “understanding” that a municipal water or wastewater utility could call upon its neighbouring utility for assistance. In recent years, concern has been raised in respect of this latter informal practice with regard to liability, legal and regulatory requirements, and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) requirements. The WARN program establishes a legal framework where any subscribing utility can call upon the assistance of other subscribing utilities, with the response being provided within the context of a blanket “mutual aid” type of agreement. The blanket agreement would cover all aspects of legal liability, availability of response and the provision of services, and health and safety requirements, to name a few.

A “Frequently-asked-Questions” fact sheet, developed by the American Water Works Association is attached to this report as Appendix A for the Board’s information and reference.

### **WARN in Ontario**

In previous years, Board staff have investigated the possibility of establishing a mutual-aid type of agreement between the benefiting municipalities of the Lake Huron Primary Water Supply System and the Elgin Area Primary Water Supply System. During the course of the investigation, similar discussions have been undertaken with the Ontario Water Works Association (a Section of the American Water Works Association), the Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program via the Ministry of the Environment, and Emergency Measures Ontario.

Similar efforts were being undertaken within the Ontario Water Works Association to establish an Ontario-based mutual assistance program, based on the AWWA Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network. The purpose of a WARN system is to enable municipalities to provide mutual aid in preparing for, and responding to, interruptions in water and wastewater services resulting from natural and man-made disasters. In the event of an emergency, the WARN program is one “tool in the toolbox” for responding to and dealing with significant emergencies which are beyond the immediate capacity of the utility. This is especially beneficial when there is a community-wide, county-wide or greater emergency, wherein a given utility can be more self-sufficient allowing the community emergency response to focus resources in other areas if needed.

Participation in the WARN program does not specifically require a subscribing municipality to respond to any and all calls for assistance, nor does it obligate a subscribing municipality to call upon all subscribers for assistance in the event of an emergency.

On April 7, 2011 the OWWA arranged for municipal representatives to attend a workshop entitled “Utilities Helping Utilities: Mutual Aid Response Networks for Water and Wastewater Systems.” OWWA sent invitations to a small group of municipalities intending to get a representative sample of the Ontario Water/Wastewater utilities. Municipalities in attendance included Guelph, Sudbury, Peterborough, Durham, London, Waterloo, Niagara, Windsor, Toronto and Midland. An Ontario WARN Leadership Team chaired by Peterborough (Patricia Skopelianos) and co-chaired by London (Andrew Henry, Lake Huron/Elgin Area Water Supply) was established. The responsibilities of the Leadership Team include establishing the OnWARN governance structure and mutual aid agreement and establishing the OnWARN membership network. Attendees were tasked with confirming their membership on the OnWARN Leadership team and gathering sample mutual aid agreements.

A follow-up meeting of the Leadership Team was held on May 12, 2011 in Toronto, and the established Leadership Team is now fully committed to the development of an Ontario-based WARN program.

### ***Example WARN Program/Scenario***

Events such as 9/11, the 1994 Northridge earth-quake, the 1997 Red River flood, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 identified a need for water and wastewater utilities in the USA to create intra-state mutual aid and assistance programs, and further discussions are ongoing with developing inter-state agreements between state WARN programs. WARNs were developed because Water and Wastewater utilities require specialized resources; critical infrastructure depends on water services; and promoting mutual aid/assistance meets with emergency preparedness and response requirements.

In 2006 four States implemented WARNs (Florida, California, Louisiana and Texas) and currently forty seven American States and the Province of Alberta have developed and implemented WARN initiatives. Delaware, Mississippi and Alaska have not yet fully implemented a WARN, but have started the process.

WARNs have been used successfully in response to many incidents including:

- 2005 Hurricane Katrina (FlaWARN)
- 2008 Detroit Oregon Blizzard (ORWARN)
- 2008 Waterborne Salmonella Outbreak Alamosa CO (CoWARN)
- 2009 Ice Storm (ARWARN, TNWARN, KYWARN)
- 2010 Baja California Earthquake (CalWARN)

In 2008 the AWWA studied the benefit of utilities participation in a WARN. The study included literature reviews, consultations with utility managers and a survey. Seventy eight utilities responded to the survey; a significant number were located in North Eastern USA, 11% of water utility respondents represented utilities which served a population greater than 1 million and 16% of the wastewater respondents represented utilities which served a population greater than 1 million. The findings include the following:

- 82% of the 76 respondents provided mutual aid and/or assistance in the last 20 years. The most common forms were personnel (86%), generators (38%), other equipment (67%), vehicles (49%), other parts and supplies (35%), laboratory services (17%). Financial aid, chemicals, and water, were less common (all 11% or less)
- The costs to participate in a WARN, exclusive of the cost of actually providing mutual aid, includes staff time to develop resource listing for databases and legal and planning costs to establish and maintain participation.

Based on the information available at this time, the following has been identified as potential benefits to participation in the proposed Ontario WARN program:

- Establishment of an Ontario Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (OnWARN) is encouraged by the Ministry of Environment, Emergency Measures Ontario and Environment Canada, as the initiative supports voluntary Federal and Provincial programs aimed at strengthening resiliency of Canada's critical infrastructure. The support of a large utilities such as Toronto, London, and Windsor would likely influence other utilities to become members and thereby strengthen the resiliency of the Ontario Water/Wastewater sector as a whole.
- Establishment of a standard mutual aid agreement with other water utilities will help utilities to better predict, track and recover costs associated with providing and receiving mutual aid.
- The mutual aid agreement template developed as part of the OnWARN initiative can be extended to other parties. The Kansas mutual aid network KASMAP includes gas and electric utilities. The New Hampshire mutual aid network (NHPWMA) includes other public works departments such as transportation and building inspectors.
- An OnWARN would provide an additional forum for municipal water and wastewater utilities to network, and share operational and emergency preparedness information with other utilities. There is an opportunity to work collaboratively, share information and pool resources in the area of emergency planning, as well as the opportunity to develop and participate in joint training sessions and exercises.

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**CONCLUSION**

As evidenced by its successful implementation and use in the United States and the Province of Alberta, the Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network program is seen as a potentially significant benefit to water and wastewater utilities in Ontario. Board staff are currently participating in the development of a program and template agreement for and Ontario-based WARN program, along with other municipalities such as Guelph, Sudbury, Peterborough, Durham, Waterloo, Niagara, Windsor, Toronto and Midland.

The Board's endorsement of the development of this program will be beneficial, and afford the opportunity for the regional water systems to showcase the program to the area municipalities.

Report Prepared by:	Recommended by:
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Andrew Henry, P. Eng. Division Manager, Regional Water Supply	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> John Braam, P. Eng. Director of Water & City Engineer
	Reviewed and concurred:
	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Pat McNally, P. Eng. Chief Administrative Officer

**Attachments:**

Appendix A: W.A.R.N. Frequently Asked Questions



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**File No. H17/2011**

**APPENDIX A: W.A.R.N. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**