

January 25, 2021

Alison Pilla
Assistant Deputy Minister (A)
Drinking Water and Environmental Compliance Division
Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks

Dear Ms. Pilla,

I am writing you to request that you take urgent action to address the increasing risk of COVID infections amongst water and wastewater system operators and managers.

As you know, the Regional Public Works Commissioners of Ontario represents the senior managers of public works departments in the largest upper tier and single tier municipalities in the Province. Collectively, we own and operate water and wastewater systems that serve over 75 % of Ontario's population.

With escalating COVID infections, the RPWCO membership came together last Friday to discuss our heightened concern over potential service disruption in the delivery of water and wastewater services in Ontario due to cases of COVID. It was unanimously agreed that RPWCO would send a letter to the Ontario Government requesting that the authority provided to water and water system owners under O.Reg. 75/20 in April 2020 be reinstated.

We were therefore alarmed when we saw the Ontario Government news release (Jan. 16, 2021) about the reinstatement of emergency orders from last spring, **which specifically excluded O.Reg. 75 (April 2020 version)**. Since then, O Reg. 75/20 has been revoked entirely.

With cases up to six times higher than last spring when this authority was originally introduced, both operators and managers responsible for the delivery of safe drinking water in Ontario are at great risk of COVID infection or quarantine. Faced with these challenging circumstances, RPWCO requests that the Ontario Government revisit this decision and reinstate O.Reg. 75 authority as a priority.

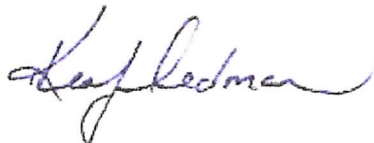
The authority that we are seeking to have reinstated would provide greater flexibility with regard to staffing decisions to operate a public drinking water system in the event of an operator shortage due to COVID infections/quarantines. It would allow for professional engineers as well as anyone certified as of 2015 to operate a water system. Also, anyone who had previously managed a given type of system would be permitted to operate a system of that type. We also request that the flexibility with regard to certification in O.Reg. 75/20 also be extended.

The potential disruption to the delivery of safe drinking water and treatment of wastewater due to COVID-19 poses an unacceptable risk to public health and safety. Once again, we request that O. Reg. 75/20 authority provided in April 2020 be temporarily reinstated until the current state of emergency is declared over.

We respectfully request a call with you within the next week to discuss this important matter. Could you kindly have your staff contact Nicola Crawhall at 416-407-5880 to arrange a time that is mutually convenient.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kealy Dedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Kealy Dedman
Chair
RPWCO

cc. B. Macgregor, Regional and Single Tier CAOs
M. Di Tommaso, Deputy Solicitor General, Solicitor General's Office
Dr. B. Yaffe, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, MOHLTC