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Local coalition asks federal government to step in on Erin sewage plant

Coalition finds environmental studies on sewage plant 'deficient'

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ERIN – The Coalition for the West Credit River is concerned about the health of the river once a wastewater treatment plant is operating in Erin and is calling on the federal government to step in.

The coalition is asking Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, to review the environmental study report for the Erin plant under the Impact Assessment Act.

The coalition believes the Erin plant will discharge over 7 million litres of effluent daily, “releasing a toxic plume of chloride, ammonia and decreased oxygen into the West Credit River.”

This will impact a native brook trout spawning nursery and habitat, and endangered redbreasted dace directly downstream, the coalition states.

While members recognize that growth in Erin and Hillsburgh will happen, “it must be reasonable and sustainable growth,” they say.

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“The plan is to grow the population from its current 4,500 to about 18,873, which is widely considered to be excessive in light of the size of the effluent’s receiving stream.”

Along with growth comes an increase in hard surfaces, commercial development, traffic, road salt and other pollutants, stormwater run-off, groundwater usage, and heat island effects – all of which will impact the Credit River, they say and put aquatic species at risk.

Coalition members conducted their own review of the environmental study report and found it deficient due to:

- inadequate consideration of the cumulative effects of population growth;
- failure to require crucial limits and design objectives for effluent temperature; and
- failure to consider the UNESCO Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve, which is 700m downstream of where effluent will be discharged.

The coalition also believes the Town of Erin and Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks failed to exercise due diligence and provide transparency on decision making.

“This Class A Environmental Assessment was flawed and narrow, whereas a federal environmental assessment would provide a thorough review,” the coalition states.

Judy Mabee, president of the Belfountain Community Organization, says the coalition’s review “revealed a lack of due diligence in key areas such as climate change, effluent temperature, cumulative effects, and stakeholder notification and consultation.

“The report provides details on these and other serious areas of concerns that, if left unchecked, will have deadly consequences on West Credit River brook trout.”

The Coalition for the West Credit River represents the Belfountain Community Organization, Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club, Ontario Rivers Alliance, Ontario Streams, Trout Unlimited Canada – Greg Clark Chapter, and the West Credit River Watch.



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