



**Raw Water for Irrigation Phase 2**

**Technical Memorandum 1  
Initial Public Information Centres**

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Project Manager

August 28, 2006

**TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM 1  
INITIAL PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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**1.0 Introduction**

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Consultation is an essential component of the Raw Water for Irrigation Study – Phase 2. In order to initiate an effective consultation process, a significant effort in public communication was made at the project onset. Two Public Information Centres (PICs) were held in August for this purpose.

The objectives of the initial Public Information Centres (PICs) were the following:

- Ensure that all interested parties were aware that Phase 2 has initiated.
- Expand the communication base of the project.
- Obtain public support and cooperation for a number of initial field activities.
- Generate ideas for the project.
- Generally engage the public in the project.

In order to facilitate attendance by the general public, in particular the agricultural community, it was decided to hold two identical PICs, one in Niagara-on-the-Lake and one in Lincoln.

Notices of the Public Information Centres (see Appendix 1) were published in three regional newspapers for two weeks prior to the PICs. Furthermore, these notices were sent to the organizations and individuals on the project Contact List (this Contact List is an updated version of the Contact List used during the Feasibility Study). The notices may have been further distributed by the recipient organizations to their membership.

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**2.0 Description of Public Information Centres**

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The initial project Public Information Centres (PICs) were held at the following locations, dates and times:

- Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Offices, August 16, 2006, 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM
- Lincoln Municipal Offices, August 17, 2006, 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM

The posters presented at the PICs illustrated the following aspects of the project:

- Description of Class Environmental Assessment.
- Review of Phase 1 Study (Feasibility Study) which was completed in 2005.
- Various aspects of Phase 2 Study including tasks, work flow and organization of project team.
- Invitation to discuss the project with the project team and submit comments.

In addition to the posters on the overall project, Ontario Weather Network provided a detailed description of their methodology and past experience in weather and soil monitoring. They also put on display selected weather and soil monitoring equipment.

Several members of the project team were available at the PIC to discuss various aspects of the project with any interested individual. These included:

- Project managers responsible for the project (Client and Consultant).
- Staff from Ontario Weather Network.
- The Economic Benefits Study Team.

Nine persons signed the attendance registration of the Niagara-on-the-Lake PIC and two individuals signed the attendance registration of the Lincoln PIC. A few attendees did not sign the registration. We estimate that the number of the public attendees at the two PICs was between 15 and 20 persons.

The comments expressed at the PICs to the consultant project manger were in general in support of the project, with some reservations on the cost of the project, environmental impacts and its impact on the existing Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Irrigation System.

A few photographs from one of the PICs are shown in Appendix 2.

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A total of four written comments were made by completing the comment forms provided at the meeting. These were either dropped in the comment box during the PICs or faxed to the consultant Project Manager after the PICs. These comments are shown in Appendix 3. The following are summaries of the written comments:

- The Niagara-on-the-Lake municipal system is working well and has excess capacity. Why replace a system that is working well and has little cost with a costly system?
- The ground water table in Niagara has been falling in the recent years, which has resulted in the deterioration of water quality. Efforts should be made to restore historical groundwater levels by diverting drainage water to wetlands. There is also concern about small water takings which do not require a permit, but cumulatively can substantially affect groundwater levels, as well as other possible causes of falling ground water levels.
- “Cost to growers is very important. Please consider [that the] NOTL present system is working very well.”
- The study should seek a broad range of benefits beyond agriculture. A broad range of water conservation and water enhancing measures should be considered. Enhancement of natural environment should be included in the project. Integration with other watershed studies should enhance the results of the project.

We have considered the comments and provide the following explanations (the following explanations are in the same order as the summary comments above):

- It is true that the Niagara-on-the-Lake municipal system is working well and is providing irrigation water at a relatively low cost to some growers in the area. However, the benefits of the system can be expanded to include other growers and to provide additional water during periods of high demand. We acknowledge that cost is a major factor. Our overall focus during the current phase is to identify a solution that maximizes the value for money while minimizing environmental costs. Support for the existing Niagara-on-the-Lake municipal system is one of the short-listed alternatives that will be considered during this phase. The final decision to continue with the existing system, drastically change it, or do something in between will ultimately rest with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- An environmental review will be carried out prior to making the final selection of the Preferred Alternatives. Opportunities to enhance environmental benefits of the project will be considered during this phase. We will be able to comment on opportunities to enhance the natural environment once the review is complete. Again, the ultimate decision will rest with the community and the regulatory agencies.
- (Refer to the explanation in the first bullet above.)

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- (Refer to the explanation in the second bullet above.)

The comments are thought to be representative of reservation about the proposed projects. The PIC has provided an opportunity for the expression of the two issues strongly felt by many individuals and groups in the region: cost, and impact on the natural environment.

In general, the project team was hoping for a more active participation of the general public in these PICs. However, it should be noted that the growers have been informed about the commencement of the study through various other means (eg. grower organizations, word of mouth and Notice of Public Information Centre). During the PICs the project team did not have new information to provide. Therefore, low participation during a period of high work load should have been expected. It should be noted that the PICs were necessary to ensure that no one is left out of the communication loop.

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**3.0 Conclusions**

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The primary objective of the Public Information Centres (PICs) was to ensure that all interested stakeholders were informed of the commencement of the project and had a chance to engage in the communication process of the project. We believe most of the communication objectives of the PICS were achieved by a variety of the formal and informal channels prior to the PICs.

The PICs served as venues for discussing the main issues under consideration. From discussions with various stakeholders during the PICs and review of the written comments, it is concluded that the following are primary issues of concern of the general public with regard to the project:

- Cost of the infrastructure: the economic burden to the growers will be a central theme for any irrigation project.
- Environmental issues: the proposed project may be expected not only to have minimal environmental costs but also to be an opportunity for enhancing the natural environment of the Niagara Region.

These issues will form the basis for the evaluation of the different project alternatives.

**-- Stantec Consulting Ltd. --**



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**APPENDIX 1**

**Notice of Public Information Centres**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE  
THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA  
MASTER PLAN  
FOR AGRICULTURAL IRRIGATION IN THE NORTHERN PORTION OF NIAGARA  
REGION**

**The Study**

The Regional Municipality of Niagara, through their consultant, Stantec Consulting Limited, is carrying out a study to identify options for providing raw water to fruit, grape and greenhouse growers in Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines, Lincoln, Grimsby and Pelham. The goal of the study is to determine an irrigation scheme or schemes that are able to meet the needs of the agricultural community in this area, while being financially feasible and environmentally sound.

**The Process**

The study will be conducted in accordance with the Municipal Engineers Association's Class Environmental Assessment process. This is an approved process under the Environmental Assessment Act.

**Initial Phase**

Phase 1 of this study was implemented from December 2004 to August 2005, during which two Public Information Centres were held. This initial phase subdivided the target agricultural lands into four irrigation districts, identified a number of servicing alternatives for each irrigation district and recommended a comprehensive further study (Phase 2) to finalize the selection of the optimum alternative for each district. The Final Report of Phase 1 is available at the following web site: <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/ap/irrigation.aspx>.

**Current Phase**

The second phase of this study was initiated in July 2006 and is expected to be completed within 12 months. During the initial months of the current phase, several field studies will take place. This phase will identify one feasible alternative for each irrigation district, produce a justification for the project base on its economic benefits, and complete the Phase 2 Class Environmental Assessment requirements for the proposed project.

The current phase of this study is funded in part through contributions by the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario under the Canada-Ontario Water Supply Expansion Program (COWSEP), an initiative of the federal-provincial-territorial Agricultural Policy Framework designed to position Canada's agri-food sector as a world leader. The Agricultural Adaptation council administers COWSEP.

**Public Consultation and Input**

Public consultation is a key component of this study. The Project Team is working with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of representatives from a variety of stakeholders including the Region's Public Works and Planning Departments, affected local municipalities, agricultural organizations, the Federal Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Ontario Power Generation, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority.

Two Public Information Centres (PIC) are planned as detailed below to present the objectives and activities of the current phase of the study. Both PICs will be the same and will follow an informal, "drop-in" format by which large display boards will be used to present project information including background information on the study, the identification and evaluation of various alternatives and the recommended irrigation schemes. Representatives from the Region, Stantec and the TAC will be present at the PICs to answer questions and discuss comments on the study.

**Wednesday August 16, 2006  
4 PM to 8 PM  
Niagara-on-the-Lake Municipal Offices  
1593 Creek Road, Virgil**

**Thursday August 17, 2006  
4 PM to 8 PM  
Lincoln Municipal Offices  
4800 South Service Road, Beamsville**

### **Comments**

You are encouraged to provide comments throughout the study. We are interested in hearing any comments or concerns that you may have. To facilitate the exchange of information pertaining to this project, a website has been set up at <http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/ap/irrigation.aspx> where project information will be posted and input can be received. All comments received will be considered in identifying the preferred scheme. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the Public Record.

At the completion of the study, a Project Report will be written to document the process and the conclusions reached. The Report will be made available for public review for a period of 30 calendar days. The public will be notified of the date, time and location of the filing of the Report at the appropriate time through newspaper notices and a further letter mailed to those in the project's contact database.

To request that your name be added to the project contact list, or if you have any questions or comments related to this study, please contact either of the following:

Mr. Drew Semple  
Regional Municipality of Niagara  
Planning and Development  
3550 Schmon Parkway, P.O. Box 1042  
Thorold, Ontario L2V 2T7  
Tel: 1-800-263-7215  
Fax: 905-641-5208  
email: [drew.semple@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:drew.semple@regional.niagara.on.ca)

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This Notice issued 1<sup>st</sup> August 2006.



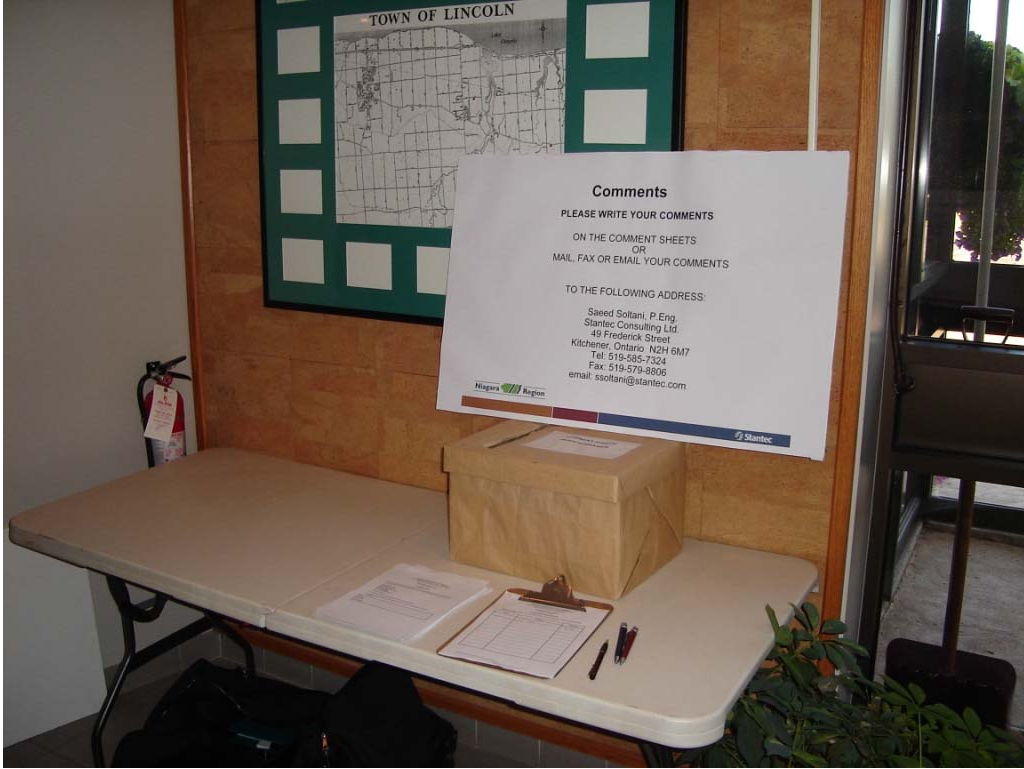


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**APPENDIX 2**

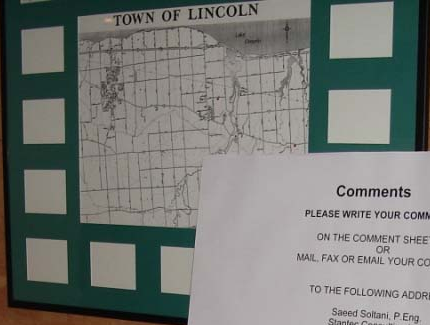
**Photographs**





**Comments**  
PLEASE WRITE YOUR COMMENTS  
ON THE COMMENT SHEETS  
OR  
MAIL, FAX OR EMAIL YOUR COMMENTS  
TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:  
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Niagara Region  
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**APPENDIX 3**

**Written Comments**

COMMENTS:

WHEN SPEAKING WITH THE TOWN AT  
THE LAST MEETING (16<sup>TH</sup> AUG 06). REGARDING  
N.O.T.L IRRIGATION. (WATER SHED)

N.O.T.L IS CURRENTLY USING THE  
SYFIN/PUMP SYSTEM IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
THE GRAVITY/MAN MADE DRAINAGE DITCHES.  
CURRENTLY N.O.T.L IS ONLY USING  
ABOUT 10%. WE COULD INCREASE THE  
AMOUNT AS THE DEMAND IS NEEDED.  
AT MINAMOL COSTS.

WHY CHANGE SOMETHING THATS  
ALREADY WORKING EFFECTIVELY!

GRAVITY IS FREE!

PUMPS MINAMOL!

PIPES/INSTALLATION/RUNNING COSTS

LOTS OF MONEY!!!

COMMENTS:

In many areas of Niagara the watertable has been going down. Water drawn from lower strata has too high salt & sulphur content to be useful for irrigation or dairy. Every effort must be made to capture drainage in wetlands to restore the groundwater to historic levels. Also water use must be metered. If only withdrawal of 50000 L/da requires a permit what happens when 50 wells draw 1000 L/da? What is causing the problem of low water? Municipal Agricultural Drains? Quarry dewatering? Water use irrigation golf courses etc? Intensive cropping practices etc? Elimination of Farm Bush Ponds Hedgerows?



COMMENTS:

I will read Phase One Study on website and may send additional comments.

Study should seek a range of benefits and not just agriculture. We could be having appropriate tree planting that could enhance groundwater, major opportunity for water conservation - should examine potential if all rural rooftops were properly tapped for cisterns, should integrate study into restoration efforts such as Four Mile Creek Watershed study. Irrigation channels should be designed to enhance any existing natural habitats, especially if already recognized as such through category designation. Appropriate buffers should be established for such channels, no barriers should be created to ~~reco~~ recognized fish habitat.