

## **Local Citizens Organizations Call an Emergency Meeting to Express Concerns and Implications of Nestlé’s proposed ‘voluntary levy’ in the Town of Erin**

**For Immediate Release**

**April 11, 2017**

**The Town of Erin - Wellington County** – Concerned residents of Erin and Hillsburgh, along with Wellington Water Watchers (WWW), are raising the alarm about Nestlé Waters proposed ‘voluntary levy’ that will tie the Town of Erin to profits made from selling and exporting local water, setting a dangerous and lasting precedent.

An urgent public meeting to ask Council to say no Nestlé’s proposed offer is planned for Wednesday, April 12, 7:00 pm at Erin United Church, 115 Main Street. Speakers will update the audience on what they can do to support their Council to say no to the Nestlé levy.

Nestlé’s proposal to pay a fee of 50 cents for every 1000 litres of water it extracts from the Hillsburgh well is an amount equivalent to the \$500 per million litres the Ontario government is proposing as the new fee for water-taking permits. Nestlé Director of Corporate Affairs Jennifer Kerr says the fact the voluntary levy fee amount is the same as the province’s is a ‘co-incidence’.

This rushed proposal is heading for a potential vote at the Tuesday, April 18 meeting of the Town of Erin Council.

There has been no opportunity for public discussion of this voluntary levy, and the approval process is moving at breakneck speed, creating confusion before citizens understand the potentially serious implications that such a deal will have.

*“Our ultimate goal in asking Town Council to decline the voluntary levy is to begin accomplishing a much bigger task here,” says Erin resident Linda Rosier. “We would like to have the bottled water industry phased out, starting here in our town. Nestlé’s water-taking permit renewal is coming up in just three months. If our Town Council says ‘no’ to the levy, we will have a much stronger voice when we ask the province to deny the renewal of Nestlé’s permit to take water from the Hillsburgh well-site.”*

Wellington Water Watchers believe Nestlé’s proposal sets a dangerous precedent.

*“No one, including any municipality, should be profiting from the extraction of water. If accepted, Nestlé’s proposal could set a dangerous precedent and will impact communities across the country, while leaving behind a hot potato for future councils to deal with,” says Mike Nagy, chairperson of Wellington Water Watchers. “Nestlé’s offer could be seen as an informal contract for reselling Ontario water, opening the doors to further ‘commodification’ of this precious public resource.”*

The Ontario government does not ‘sell’ water to Nestlé, Nagy explained. “The fees it sets are only a charge for the cost recovery of managing the permit-to-take-water application process, not to make a profit. But in this case, if Nestlé’s proposed levy passes, the Town of Erin will be profiting from a partnership with a private corporation whose mandate is to acquire and sell more and more water.”

Robert Case of Wellington Water Watchers says *the Town of Erin Council “must reject outright any attempts by Nestlé to circumvent provincial policy and regulations by accepting money for removal of the community’s water. At the very least, a decision on this Nestlé proposal must be postponed until there is full and thorough discussion in the community and with the province.”*

Nestlé’s proposal, which was presented to the Town of Erin Council on February 1, is scheduled to be voted on at the council’s April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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**About Wellington Water Watchers:** Founded in 2007, Wellington Water Watchers (WWW) is a volunteer-run, non-profit organization based in Guelph, Ontario. Committed to the protection of water resources and public education, WWW works to affect local water policy and protect water sources. WWW also sponsors and supports guest speakers, debates, and are active at bottled-water free community events.

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