SPEAKING OF:
Septic Systems

Source Water Protection is a provincial program to protect our municipal drinking water sources (water found in lakes, rivers and underground) from contamination and overuse.

Out of sight, out of mind

Your septic system is located underground. When functioning correctly, it provides a safe, reliable way of treating your household waste and wastewater. In fact, you may not always even remember that it's there. But just like your home appliances, roof or furnace, septic systems need maintenance, repair and eventual replacement. A properly installed and maintained septic system should last 20 to 30 years.

Protecting water: caring for your septic system

DO	DON'T
• Know the location of your septic system and leaching bed	• Put cooking oils or food waste down the drain
• Get your septic system pumped every 3 to 5 years	• Pour or flush hazardous chemicals, or pharmaceuticals
• Keep accurate records of your septic maintenance	• Use special additives that claim to enhance your system's performance – you don't need them
• Get your effluent filter checked and cleaned every year	• Drive or park over your tank or leaching bed
• Divert surface water, including gutters and your sump pump away from your leaching bed	• Plant trees and shrubs near the tank or leaching bed
• Replace inefficient toilets with low flow models	• Use anti-bacterial soaps, bleaches and harsh cleaning products

A failing septic system can contaminate drinking water

A malfunctioning septic system can release wastes and bacteria into the ground and can contaminate groundwater or surface water. Because our drinking water comes from these sources, if they are contaminated the safety of our water may be compromised. A failed septic system may also decrease your property value, and cause expensive repairs. Regular maintenance will extend the life of your system and save you money.

Signs that your septic system isn't working

- Bad smell
- Appearance of an unpleasant-looking liquid in the leaching bed
- Spongy spots on or near the leaching bed
- Sewage on the ground or near the leaching bed
- Slow moving or backed-up drains in your home
- More lush vegetation over the septic bed
- Not all warning signs are visible above ground – an inspection of the tank is necessary to be certain.

What do I need to do?

Regular inspections every three years can help prevent problems. For a small number of properties, an inspection every five years is required under the building code, the *Clean Water Act*, *Lake Simcoe Protection Act*, and the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Protection Plan.

Mandatory inspections apply when your property is located:

- Within 100 metres of the Lake Simcoe shoreline or within 100 metres of another body of water within the Lake Simcoe watershed
- Near a municipal well or surface water intake area

If your property is located in one of these areas, the municipal Chief Building Official may contact you to ensure your system is being maintained properly. For more information on septic systems, or on how to get in touch with a qualified septic contractor, contact your local municipality.

ASK TO SEE THE LICENSE:
Anyone in the business of installing, repairing, servicing or pumping septic systems must be licensed by the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Private wells are your responsibility

The measures put in place to protect municipal drinking water supplies do not include private drinking water wells. As a private well owner, you still need to be regularly testing your water and you need to make sure you're maintaining your well. If you have any health concerns about your well water, contact your local district health unit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

Name of Municipality
Address line 1
Address line 2

Phone:
Email:

Name of Source Protection Authority
Address line 1
Address line 2

Phone:
Email:

DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION
ACT FOR CLEAN WATER

South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region
ourwatershed.ca