



Lake Erie Water Quality – Taste and Odour Advisory

March 11, 2025

With changing temperature and weather conditions, a significant change in the water quality on Lake Erie has occurred. This change may cause a slight but noticeable taste and odour in the treated water supplied to area municipalities from the Elgin Area Primary Water Supply System (EAPWSS). Changing raw water conditions are very common for Lake Erie in spring and fall.

On March 6, 2025, a significant change in raw water quality from Lake Erie was observed by plant operators. The raw water turbidity increased significantly and is attributed to the break-up of the winter ice cover on the lake, recent wind and rain events, and significant spring runoff. When lake conditions rapidly change, the taste and odour events can occur and the water can be difficult to treat depending on the severity of the event.

When incoming raw water into the plant changes, the Elgin Area Water Treatment Plant makes operational changes to address the current circumstances. The water treatment process has been adjusted to counter this change in raw water quality. The powdered activated carbon (PAC) system, which is used to control taste and odour, has been turned on. Increased water quality monitoring protocols have been implemented, with additional water quality samples being taken to gain further information about this specific taste and odour event.

The treated water supplied to the area municipalities from the EAPWSS continues to meet the stringent water quality standards established by Ontario Regulation. The water system's contracted operating authority, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, works diligently to ensure the treated water quality continues meet the drinking water standards; however, some consumers may notice a change in the appearance (colour), taste or odour during this type of event.

Operations staff keep in close contact with other drinking water systems along the north shore of Lake Erie to share information about changing lake conditions. Member municipalities that receive water from the EAPWSS will be advised of events that may impact their local municipal water distribution systems.

Consumers with questions or concerns about the supply of drinking water from their municipal water distribution system should contact their local municipality.

Background

The Elgin Area Water Treatment Plant (WTP) utilizes a conventional chemically-assisted sedimentation and filtration water treatment process to treat and supply drinking water approximately 138,000 people in the municipalities of Bayham, Central Elgin, Dutton Dunwich, Malahide and Southwold, as well as the Town of Aylmer and the cities of St. Thomas and London.

On average, the Elgin Area WTP supplies about 44 million litres of water per day to area municipalities, with a maximum summer peak in the order of 61 million litres.

Raw water from Lake Erie, treatment processes, and treated drinking water supplied to area municipalities are continuously monitored using computerized analyzers. Onsite operational laboratory testing is conducted at the WTP every four hours to monitor and confirm treatment processes and water quality. Additional samples are sent to an accredited laboratory daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly to verify treatment quality and to further ensure the treated drinking water meets the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards.

The taste and odour of the water from Lake Erie is treated at this facility using powder-activated carbon added to the raw water as it enters the water treatment facility, which is subsequently removed through the sedimentation and filtration processes.

The drinking water supplied to area municipalities is disinfected using both chlorine and ultraviolet light (UV), and chlorine residuals are monitored and maintained in the transmission system which supplies the area municipalities.

Additional information about the Elgin Area Primary Water Supply System is available at: <https://huronelginwater.ca/>

For further information please contact: general@huronelginwater.ca