

## Abstract

### **RISKY BUSINESS: THE ROLE OF RISK PERCEPTION IN THE ONTARIO SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PLANNING PROCESS**

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The purpose of this research was:

1. to investigate whether the perception of drinking water-related risk differs between the public and a Source Protection Committee established under Ontario's new *Clean Water Act* to make decisions about source water protection,
2. to explore how the public makes risk-based decisions about drinking water-related risk, and,
3. to estimate how any differences in drinking water-related risk perception and decision making between the Committee and the public may affect the implementation of the *Clean Water Act*.

Mail and telephone surveys were conducted in a Southern Ontario Region of Study, and were given to samples of the public and the Committee. The two groups had different perceptions of water risk, which could pose challenges for making collective decisions about water risks.

Successful source water protection depends on the ability of Committees and the public to make appropriate decisions about risks to drinking water sources.