

LETTER TO THE RESIDENTS OF WALKERTON**APPENDIX C (I)**

THE WALKERTON INQUIRY

LA COMMISSION
D'ENQUÊTE WALKERTON

June 22, 2000

To The Residents of Walkerton:

I have been appointed as Commissioner of a public inquiry to inquire into the circumstances which caused illness and deaths of residents in the Walkerton area in May and June, 2000, at or around the same time as E. Coli bacteria were found to be present in the town's water supply. The Commission will investigate the cause of these events including the effect, if any, of government policies, procedures and practices. The terms of reference are broad and I am confident we will be able to fully explore all of the reasons that contributed to this tragedy. The Commission will also look into other matters necessary to ensure the safety of Ontario's drinking water.

The Commission considers it important that we hear from the residents in Walkerton about the impact of this tragedy on their lives and the town as a whole. One of the ways to do this is for the Commission to have a relatively informal initial community meeting with the residents. I would like to have such a meeting as early as possible. It seems to me that understanding the scope of the impact upon the residents will provide a foundation for further inquiries. However, my staff and I are concerned that we not intrude unduly on the residents at a time when they may not be ready to speak publicly about the impact of these events. If it turns out that the residents feel that it is now too early for a community meeting, we will hold it at a later date.

In the meantime, I suggest the week of July 20, 2000 for the initial community meeting. What I would like to do at the initial meeting is to hear from individual residents with respect to the impact this matter has had upon them. Individuals will be given the opportunity to come forward and speak about the impact this has had on their lives or to express their thoughts in writing.

At the more formal hearings, which will begin this Fall, the Commission will look into the causes that gave rise to the tragedy. Prior to those hearings, those wishing to apply for standing will be given an opportunity to do so. Participation in the earlier community hearing will not foreclose participation in the more formal hearings to take place this Fall.

The Commission will contact a number of local groups, including the Concerned Citizens of Walkerton, the Walkerton & District Chamber of Commerce, and the Brockton Town Council, about the proposal for a community meeting. We are interested in obtaining a broad range of views from the community. You may express your views on the desirability of and the format for a community meeting either through your connection with one of these groups or by writing the Commission at the following address:

Commission of the Walkerton Inquiry
The Dundas/ Edward Centre
180 Dundas Street West, 22nd Floor, Box 26
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 1Z8

The Commission hopes to announce a 1-800 phone number by next week. If you prefer you may wait to contact us by phone at that time.

In making this proposal for a community meeting, I recognize that some of the residents have sought legal advice about what has occurred. I do not want to interfere with that process in any way. However, it would be most useful to the Commission to hear from the people directly affected at the type of informal community meeting I have discussed above.

This letter is being distributed on Canada News Wire (<http://www.newswire.ca>) and will be published in the Walkerton Herald Times, the Owen Sound Sun Times and the London Free Press in an effort to ensure that it comes to the attention of all of the residents of Walkerton.

Yours very truly,

Dennis O'Connor