



Dufferin Federation of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 101, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z5

**Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health**

**Re: Recommended Phase Out of Free Well Water Testing in the 2023 Auditor General's Report**

Dear Minister Jones,

In December 2023, the Auditor General released "Value for Money Audit, Public Health Ontario". Within this report there are two recommendations that will directly impact our members.

The first and most concerning is the proposal to end free microbial private water well testing. A 2019 study estimated that 1.6 million people in Ontario rely on private wells as their sole source of drinking water. We ask that you do not move forward with the recommended phase-out of free private water well testing.

The second proposal that is causing concern in our rural communities is the proposal to "streamline public health laboratory operations." A recommendation to close six of the eleven public health laboratories based on usage data collected during the pandemic would have negatively skewed the results. If these laboratories are closed, how will the government assure rural residents that the integrity of samples can be maintained due to the resulting increased travel and processing time. Northern and rural residents need access to "close to source" public laboratories to ensure well water testing safeguards.

Further, we have supported the work our local Source Water Protection Committees have undertaken to protect private well water sources. These committees access the private drinking water test data that Public Health Ontario has maintained. This data is used regularly to inform well owners of water quality concerns in the region that could be associated with health risks.

Safe drinking water is health!

Sincerely,

Bill McCutcheon  
President