

## Walkerton

### **The Summary Paragraph:**

**Step One:** Read “Walkerton disasters foreseen across Canada.”

**Step Two:** Read the selection again paying special attention to the first sentence in each paragraph. If there are any unfamiliar words use a dictionary or ask for your teacher’s help to find out the meanings.

1. What is the **Main Idea** of the reading?

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2. What idea are all the **Supporting Details** connected to?

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3. List a few of the **Supporting Details**.

- i) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- iv) \_\_\_\_\_
- v) \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Closing Sentence:** The **Closing Sentence** comes after the **Supporting Details** have been written. It should remind the reader of what has been written. The following phrase might help you with a **Closing Sentence** for this paragraph.

As is clearly shown, the Walkerton disasters \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Use the information gathered on this sheet to write a Summary Paragraph of the Walkerton Disaster. Use your own lined sheet of paper and staple the completed copy on the back page.

Thursday, January 18, 2001

# THE GLOBE AND MAIL

## Walkerton disasters foreseen across Canada

BY MARTIN MITTELSTAEDT

Drinking-water regulations across Canada are so weak that more disasters like the E. coli outbreak last year in Walkerton, Ont., are almost inevitable, a respected environmental organization warns in a report to be released today.

\* The Sierra Legal Defence Fund, in a bluntly worded report, says the country's drinking-water woes will worsen as development degrades more water sources and aging water infrastructure fails to receive the investments needed for its renewal and upgrading.

"In the absence of a comprehensive, cross-country approach to protecting drinking water, more [Walkerton] tragedies almost certainly await us," warns the report, the first national survey of its kind.

The Vancouver-based environment watchdog ranked drinking-water regulation across the country. It says Prince Edward Island, followed by Yukon, Newfoundland and British Columbia have the weakest rules, compared with Alberta, Ontario and Quebec with the best.

However, no Canadian jurisdiction has the comprehensive, national regulatory standards that apply to the United States, where testing requirements and watershed protection are far more advanced, the report states.

"While some provinces do better than others, no single jurisdiction does an exemplary job," it says.

Only three provinces — Alberta, Nova Scotia and Quebec — have adopted what the report terms

somewhat stringent federal guidelines for Canadian drinking-water quality as the main rule for assessing their drinking water.

Although Ontario ranks high, it had some of the laxest rules in the country until it tightened them after the mass poisoning last year in Walkerton killed seven residents and sickened thousands in the Ontario farming community.

Walkerton is the worst water-borne disease outbreak in modern Canadian history, but the report says it isn't the only case of a serious health threat to Canadians from water contamination.

"Environmentalists and public health advocates have long maintained that Canada's drinking water is not as safe as we may think. While it is true that the nation's drinking water is safer than most, significant problems continue to crop up across Canada," says the report, entitled *Waterproof: Canada's Drinking Water Report Card*.

The biggest health threats are poisonous micro-organisms, toxic chemicals and radioactive material. The report compiles what it calls a list that "is by no means exhaustive" of some of the country's recent water woes.

These include the discovery of the potentially lethal single-cell parasite cryptosporidium, which comes from manure, in water supplies in the Ontario communities of Collingwood and Kitchener, as well as in the British Columbia cities of Cranbrook and Kelowna. The report says fecal coliforms, indicating possible contamination by excrement, have been detected in Moncton, while cancer-causing

trihalomethanes have been found in Newfoundland.

Several Ontario communities have water contaminated by traces of trichloroethylene, a metal degreasing chemical that was the pollutant chronicled in the recent movie *A Civil Action*, while others have radioactive tritium from the province's nuclear plants.

The report says one of the major shortcomings in Canada is the failure of governments to protect watersheds from potentially harmful land uses, such as logging, factory farming and urban sprawl.

The report says good land-use planning should be the first line of defence to ensure clean water by banning harmful activities from areas that supply drinking water.

Some areas do a good job of protecting watersheds. The report singles out Saint John for praise because it has been buying environmentally sensitive lands in watersheds servicing the city.

Karen Wristen, executive director of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said the report's findings highlight the need for the provincial and federal governments to improve the management of water resources.

The report's recommendations include: laws to make drinking-water protection mandatory, rules requiring comprehensive watershed protection, mandatory training of waterworks operators and stringent reporting requirements to consumers on materials found in their water.

The report will be publicly available today at [www.sierralegal.org](http://www.sierralegal.org).

\* Karen Wristen served as the Executive Director of the Sierra Legal Defence Fund from 1998-2001

