



Minister Gerretsen gets Well Aware

26 HOWE ISLAND FERRY ROAD
KINGSTON ON, K7L 4V1.

KINGSTON (Oct. 15, 2009) – At 9:30 a.m. today, Ontario’s Minister of Environment, John Gerretsen, will meet with local homeowner Marie Devillers and representatives of Green Communities Canada to get a first-hand look at how the provincially funded Well Aware program helps protect drinking water and groundwater resources.

Well Aware’s trained representatives conduct visits, known as “guided self-assessments,” with well owners to help them learn how to manage their own wells. The visits are voluntary, non-regulatory, confidential and free.

The program was developed to meet the need for consistent, reliable information about caring for private wells. Homeowners who receive poor results from well-water tests contact Well Aware as a starting point to learn how they can improve their water. Property owners new to living on a well can also contact the program to learn how to protect and conserve their water supply from day one.

On each Kingston-area visit, Brianna Rustige, the local Well Aware representative, asks a series of questions from a standardized assessment tool to determine how the well is being managed. Afterwards she provides information and contacts that will help the homeowner follow up on recommendations made during the visit. Recommendations typically include well upgrades to meet current safety standards and removing potential contaminants from the well area.

Well Aware is the first large-scale private well stewardship program in Canada. It recently won the 2009 Sustainable Community Award for Water, awarded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and CH2MHill.

Besides well visits, Well Aware distributes a booklet and video, operates a website, conducts public forums and other outreach, and provides workshops to front-line “information providers” so that well owners get accurate and consistent advice.

Well Aware is a program of Green Communities Canada (GCC). It is delivered in Kingston by Hearthmakers, the local GCC member organization, and in 21 other Ontario upper tier municipalities by 11 GCC member organizations.



Invitees:

Minister John Gerretsen, Minister of Environment (Confirmed)
Mayor of Kingston, Harvey Rosen (to be confirmed)
Clifford Maynes, Executive Director, Green Communities Canada
Steve Walker, Executive Director, Hearthmakers Energy Cooperative
Brianna Rustige, local Well Aware Project Coordinator and trained advisor
Heather Kirby, Program Manager, Well Aware
Marie Devillers, Homeowner

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