

# City may look at protecting potential water sources

Charlottetown council discusses issue amid debate over deep- water wells

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The City of Charlottetown may look at protecting potential sources of water in the future, says the assistant manager of the Water and Sewer Utility. Richard MacEwen responded to questions from city council at its recent regular monthly meeting, telling councillors the city's water supply is protected.

The issue came up as debate continues over whether the provincial government should lift the moratorium on deep- water irrigation.

"Currently, there are regulations in place that have defined areas around our well fields that exist in the Winter River that would restrict any additional wells being drilled in those areas, particularly for deep- water irrigation," MacEwen said. "Also, the province would complete a review to ensure there was capacity for additional wells."

A provincial standing committee is currently examining the issue of deepwater wells. There are farmers who want deep- water irrigation, arguing they would not use vast quantities of water while others worry about how it could affect groundwater levels or potentially contaminate P. E. I.' s water supply.

MacEwen said the city's water is safe.

"Our areas are currently protected," he said. "There are restricted areas and no one other than ourselves can drill wells in those areas. They are defined geographical areas around our existing well fields."

Winter River is currently the city's only source of water although work is underway in Milton, wells that should be operational by 2017. But, as many are saying, more wells will be needed down the road to address an ever- growing city.

Water and sewer committee chairman Eddie Rice said the city needs to look 10, 20 years into the future.

MacEwen said staff are thinking long term.

"The discussion is that we should also look to have those same protective measures in any additional areas that we may look to have water supply," MacEwen said.

Rice said the city will be making a presentation at some point before the provincial standing committee.

“When the public meetings happen we will have to make a presentation because it will govern our present supply in the Winter River,” Rice said. “It will also affect the Miltonvale watershed. We have to make sure we are protected as far as water to the citizens of Charlottetown and the area.”