



## **For Immediate Release**

### **RE: Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant**

**Whitewater Region, Ontario – August 28, 2025**

The Township of Whitewater Region is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability and reliability of its wastewater infrastructure through the renewal of the Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). This critical project is designed to meet the evolving water management needs of the community, while supporting environmental stewardship and future growth.

Originally constructed in late 1970s, the Cobden WWTP underwent a significant upgrade between 2018 and 2022 to modernize its systems and improve wastewater quality, with preliminary work beginning in 2014, or earlier. The upgrade transitioned the plant from secondary to tertiary treatment, enhancing its ability to remove organic and inorganic compounds, including nitrogen and phosphorus, before discharging into Muskrat Lake.

Construction on the project began in fall 2018, with an initial completion target of October 2020. However, substantial completion was not reached until March 2022. The delay has led to a claim from the contractor citing impacts to the schedule and design-related changes. The parties have initiated and continue to participate in confidential dispute resolution proceedings, in accordance with the process outlined in the contract documents.

Despite substantial completion in March 2022, Township staff and the plant operator have experienced operational challenges, including multiple overflow events. In response, the Township retained an independent third-party engineering firm to conduct an assessment of the technical aspects of the Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade, including the design, construction, operations, and performance. The third-party engineer concluded that the overflow incidents were primarily caused by design issues, leading to the plant operating with less than the intended capacity for wastewater.

As a result of these findings, the Township has commenced dispute resolution proceedings with the original design engineer. The Township's legal counsel, in collaboration with independent third-party experts, continues to advise on technical matters and defend the interests of both the Township and its residents. These proceedings are being conducted confidentially to protect the legal interests of all parties involved.

To ensure continued compliance with the stringent discharge requirements, immediate corrective measures are being implemented at the Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant to improve treatment performance and ensure long-term compliance. As part of its technical review, the third-party engineer provided recommended solutions within the constraints of existing infrastructure and capital investment. This evaluation is ongoing.

"The affordability of water and wastewater remains a top priority for the Township, Council and me." – Councillor Chris Olmstead, Lead of Corporate Services.

Mayor Neil Nicholson "Council are committed to resolving these matters regarding the Cobden Wastewater Treatment Plant in the best interest of our residents and ensuring the plant meets all necessary standards for performance and environmental protection."

The Township recognizes the importance of transparency and open communication with residents. While updates will be provided as appropriate, no further information can be shared at this time due to the confidential nature of the ongoing legal process.

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