

Questions about EO Water Resources

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WINCHESTER – SD&G this year shut off its money flow to a 10-year-old regional committee devoted to water resources in this year's United Counties' budget.

But that didn't stop the issue from percolating back up at the North Dundas Council table July 12, when Ronda Boutz, South Nation Conservation (SNC) water quality coordinator, delivered an update on the agency's stewardship programs.

In her remarks, Boutz touched upon the Eastern Ontario Water Resources Committee – originally formed to implement recommendations in the Eastern Ontario Water Resources Study that was initiated in 1999 and completed in 2001. It's technically a standing committee of the SNC, but independ-

ently solicits funding from upper-tier governments like the United Counties and the City of Ottawa.

Meanwhile, SNC collects its own mandatory levies from lower-tier municipalities, to carry out a similar mandate.

In this year's budget, SD&G Counties Council put an end to the two-tier hit on property taxpayers, eliminating the committee's grant entirely after a 50 per cent cut the previous year.

Under questioning from Councillor Al Armstrong, local SNC board representative Bill Smirle admitted to "a little bit of disappointment" among committee members about the stance taken by SD&G. He suggested there was a sense that perhaps the work of the committee may not have been properly communicated to those holding the purse strings.

But Mayor Eric Duncan, a member of Counties

Council, said he and his colleagues were simply making a point about duplication of services, by cutting the grant out. "We've already got South Nation," he said. "I'd really like to see the money go directly to South Nation."

Smirle noted, however, that the committee does contract SNC to administer the funds spent on the committee's water-quality projects and improvements in the area.

However, residents of SD&G aren't eligible to apply to the committee's funding programs this year because of the budgetary snub by their elected politicians in Cornwall. The committee still has money to spend on programs outside SD&G, though, as the United Counties of Prescott-Russell and the City of Ottawa opted not to chop off their financial support.