



Beaconia Well – History, Regulatory Requirements and Current Status

Purpose

This report explains the history of the Beaconia Well, why changes were required by the Province of Manitoba, what the RM of St. Clements has done to address those requirements, and where the project stands today. It also confirms that residents who need larger volumes of potable water can continue to use the East Selkirk truck/bulk fill.

Background

The Beaconia Well was installed in 1964 as a residential well, long before today's well construction standards were in place. Over time, it became known and used as the **Beaconia Public Pail Fill**, providing residents with a local place to fill pails and jugs with water. The RM has continued to monitor the water through quarterly bacterial testing, with general chemistry testing completed by the Office of Drinking Water approximately every five years.

The Province's Groundwater and Water Well Act and associated regulations came into force January 1, 2017 and established requirements applicable to flowing artesian wells, including the requirement that owners prevent uncontrolled flow and maintain appropriate flow-control measures.

2020 – Provincial Compliance Direction

During an Office of Drinking Water inspection on September 9, 2020, the RM was advised that the Beaconia artesian well no longer met provincial requirements. The main issue was that the well flowed continuously and could not be shut off or properly controlled. The RM was therefore required to address the issue and bring the well into compliance with provincial legislation and regulations.

The legislation requires a flowing artesian well to have a flow-control device capable of stopping discharge and capable of withstanding freezing. It also places responsibility on the property owner to ensure that groundwater does not flow from a well in an uncontrolled manner.

Between 2020 and 2022, the direction from regulators was initially verbal. Formal written requirements followed in 2022. This distinction is important in understanding the chronology:

the regulatory concern was first communicated in 2020, while the formal written compliance requirements followed later.

2021–2022 – Options Considered

The RM considered three principal approaches:

1. Decommission the Beaconia Well and direct users to another source, including the new East Selkirk potable water truck fill.
2. Upgrade the existing Beaconia facility with flow controls and freeze-protection measures, maintaining a pail/jug-fill type service.
3. Develop a larger truck/bulk-fill facility at Beaconia using a user-pay model to help recover the greater capital and operating costs.

From an administrative perspective, the simplest and lowest-risk option was to decommission the Beaconia Well and direct users to East Selkirk. Council, however, recognized the importance of the Beaconia location to residents and wanted to maintain local access to water if a safe, legal and reasonable solution could be found.

A professional inspection was completed on February 28, 2022. The RM reported that the assessment found the existing well was approaching the end of its useful life, with sediment and low-flow concerns, and recommended consideration of a new well. The RM also reported that approximately 11 million litres of groundwater per year were being lost through uncontrolled flow.

Provincial requirements identified for the existing facility included controlling the artesian flow, addressing the hose/threaded connection and air-gap issues associated with potential contamination, and addressing disinfection requirements applicable to a drinking-water fill facility.

Community Consultation

In 2022 the RM undertook public consultation regarding the future of the well. The survey closed on June 24, 2022. The RM subsequently reported that the survey had been mailed to Beaconia-area ratepayers, promoted through municipal channels and posted at the well, and that 206 residents responded.

The consultation helped confirm that Council's goal was not simply to close the site, but to look for a practical way to keep a local water source available while still meeting provincial requirements.

2025 – Formal Well Sealing Order

The matter became more urgent when the Province issued a formal Well Sealing Order on February 18, 2025. The order required the existing Beaconia Well to be decommissioned by September 2, 2025.

The RM continued to explore alternatives to outright loss of the service. On February 26, 2025, it requested that the Province permit the Beaconia facility to be converted to a non-potable water source, accompanied by flow control, signage, notices and regular testing.

The Province subsequently advised that:

- the September 2, 2025 deadline remained in place at that time;
- conversion to a non-drinking-water fill station was not an acceptable regulatory solution;
- a new compliant public water system could be developed; and
- a newly constructed pail-fill system could potentially operate without continuous disinfection, subject to regulatory approval and a demonstrated history of satisfactory bacteriological water quality.

At that point, the RM moved away from trying to keep the old well in service and focused on building a new, compliant artesian well and pail/jug-fill system at the Beaconia site.

Development of the Replacement Well

By June 2025, the RM was preparing a formal compliance plan for a new artesian well next to the existing well. The goal was to keep the same basic community service, a pail/jug-fill station, while adding proper flow control, regular testing and the ability to add disinfection in the future if the Province required it.

The RM's June 2025 FAQ on their website emphasized that a pail-fill system could potentially receive an exemption from disinfection where the source demonstrates satisfactory bacteriological performance over time, although the Province required the RM to retain the ability to add treatment if it became necessary.

On August 25, 2025, Maple Leaf Drilling commenced work on the replacement well.

By August 28, 2025, the project included:

- a new replacement well with a pitless unit and water supply line;
- engineering and design of a prefabricated fill-station structure;
- water chemistry and quality testing;
- final design adjustments to satisfy provincial requirements; and

- continued operation of the existing Beaconia Well while the replacement system was being completed.

Because additional time was required for drilling, design, construction and commissioning, the Province extended the deadline for completion from September 2, 2025 to June 1, 2026.

The RM reiterated in September 2025 that Beaconia had historically been a pail-fill rather than a truck-fill station. Preserving that classification was significant because it offered the possibility of operating the new system without chlorination, subject to water-quality testing and provincial approval.

2026 Construction, Approval and Commissioning

Work on the new compliant water system continued through the spring and summer of 2026. Where possible, the RM kept the existing well available during construction so residents would not lose access while the replacement system was being completed.

On June 24–25, 2026, the Beaconia facility was temporarily closed to allow electrical service to be connected to the new well building. The work included trenching, electrical installation, backfilling and site restoration and represented another significant step toward commissioning the replacement facility.

Current Status

On August 13, 2026, the new Beaconia Pail Fill Station was open, approved and available for residents to use.

The new Beaconia Pail Fill Station is approved and available for public use; and the former well is permanently decommissioned as part of the transition to the new compliant system.

This is a significant milestone. The RM has replaced an aging, non-compliant well with a new compliant public pail-fill system, while keeping local water access in Beaconia and meeting the Province's decommissioning order.

East Selkirk Potable Water Bulk/Truck Fill

For residents who need larger volumes of potable water, the East Selkirk Water Treatment Plant truck-fill facility remains available.

The East Selkirk Potable Water Truck Fill provides reverse-osmosis potable water and is:

- available 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
- accessed using a reloadable prepaid card available from the RM office; and
- available at the approved bulk water rate. The RM's current webpage posts the rate as \$3.30 per 1,000 litres.

Only potable/drinking-water containers are permitted at the facility; spray tanks, spray equipment and chemicals are not permitted.

Beaconia will continue to serve as a natural artesian well as a local pail/jug-fill location. Residents who need large amounts of bulk potable water for cisterns or other larger-volume uses can continue to access the East Selkirk facility at the approved municipal bulk water rates.

Summary

The Beaconia Well issue began because a well built in 1964 had to be brought into line with today's provincial groundwater and drinking-water requirements. The Province first raised the uncontrolled artesian flow as a compliance issue in 2020. Formal written requirements followed in 2022, and a Well Sealing Order was issued in February 2025.

Rather than simply closing the service, Council and Administration chose to pursue a replacement system that would keep Beaconia's long-standing pail/jug-fill service available while meeting modern regulatory standards. A new artesian well has now been drilled, a compliant fill facility has been built, required water-quality testing has been completed, and the new Beaconia Pail Fill Station is open and approved for public use.

The RM removed the old well shack and above-grade casing, then finished gravel placement, grading and site cleanup.

Potable bulk water remains available through the East Selkirk Truck Fill for residents who need larger volumes of water.