



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Recent water problem was part of large, town-wide incident: Region

(The following letter was addressed to Milton resident Rodney T. Ramsden and a copy was filed with *The Champion*.)

Dear Editor:

Your letter to Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh (and to *The Champion*) was forwarded to my office June 14.

The 'water authority' you refer to in your letter is the Halton Region Planning and Public Works Department. As a supervisor for the Water and Wastewater Systems Operations section, I'm responsible for the maintenance of the water distribution systems in Milton, Acton and Georgetown.

My office is located at 1600 Steeles Ave. in Milton.

The discoloured water you received on June 13 was part of a large incident that affected most of the town of Milton. An extra pump was started in the afternoon to help fill the reservoir, and the pump caused flow reversals in the system, resulting in discoloured water.

Old iron pipes don't cause the discoloured water.

The starting of the pump caused problems because of the higher levels of manganese and iron we are experiencing in the aquifer feeding the wells at Kelso Conservation Area. These naturally-occurring minerals have always been in the Milton groundwater, but their levels have been gradually increasing. The concentration of these minerals are well below the standards set in the Ontario Drinking Water Objectives, however manganese can cause discoloured water at even very low levels.

Both manganese and iron are clear when pumped from the wells, but oxidize on contact with oxygen in the distribution system.

In addition, both minerals form coatings on the inside walls of the pipe carrying the water. The coatings build up and then are easily scoured off the pipe and into the flow of water when there are flow direction changes, or changes in velocity of flows.

Fire hydrant use, broken water mains and abnormal pumping situations have all contributed to flow changes that have resulted in dirty water incidents in Milton. The discolouration that results is an aesthetic problem and does not alter the safety of drinking water.

The broken watermain incident at Bronte and Main streets in December of 1997 that you refer to in your letter was our first indication that we were having a problem with manganese levels in our distribution system.

Halton has spent a great deal of time and money investigating this discoloured water problem since it first became apparent in the distribution system in 1997. We have cleaned (swabbed) all the small watermains in Milton twice in this time period and will complete the cleaning of the large feeder mains into Milton this month. In addition, the two reservoirs in Milton have also been cleaned.

A study was commissioned to investigate solutions to eliminate the source of the problem. A well-sealing program has been completed and is being evaluated. The ultimate solution may involve filtration at the wells to reduce the levels of manganese and iron.

Until this problem is corrected, please call our office when you are experiencing discoloured water. We usually ask callers to let the water run for 10 to 15 minutes

and if it does not clear up in that time frame, we will send staff to investigate. Our usual procedure is to flow a fire hydrant on the street to help speed up the clearing of the water in the watermain.

However, at apartment buildings such as yours, flowing hydrants on the street doesn't usually provide a quick solution to the problem. We usually ask the apartment

building superintendent to flow some water to help clear things up, as there are usually dead-end lines in apartment buildings that seem to allow the discoloured water to accumulate and cause problems after the street watermains have cleared up.

If the water in your system is taking along time to clear, our staff can provide you with jugs of drinking water for your

use.

Please call if I can be of further assistance. Our office in Milton can be contacted by calling 878-8113, ext. 7706. If you wish to leave a message on my extension, call 878-8113, ext. 8147.

Greg Ellis, supervisor
Water and Wastewater Systems Operation

Have your say. Fax letters to 878-4943.

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