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Region awarded drinking water licence

By Tim Foran
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Halton Region has become one of the first municipalities in Ontario to be awarded a drinking water licence from the Province's Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

The MOE developed the licence as a new form of approval to owners of drinking water systems following recommendations issued by Justice Dennis O'Connor stemming from the Walkerton inquiry.

The new licencing program builds on the original approval process, which looked at the design, construction and operation of water plants and distribution systems, by reviewing the operator's financial plans, employee accreditations and its system for ensuring ongoing improvement.

According to the Province's recently released Chief Drinking Water Inspector's Annual

Report (2007-08), all of Halton's water systems received inspection ratings of 100 per cent. These inspections consist of inspection of plant operations, logs and sampling protocol, said MOE spokesperson Kate Jordan.

Not every one of the actual water quality tests done at Halton's various water purification plants and at public and privately-owned locations throughout its water distribution system came out perfectly clean the first time, according to Halton Region's water quality reports.

However, the reports reveal that subsequent re-samples all came out okay. The majority of initial adverse samples took place in the distribution systems, not at the Region's plants.

"In no way does this indicate you had an unsafe water supply," said Kiyoshi Oka, the Region's director of water services, noting an adverse sample could be as simple as a dust particle in the water. "We're more than confident the system is very safe."

Jordan confirmed no provincial orders have been issued to Halton's plants and said re-sampling is a normal part of the water testing process.

"The re-sampling and re-testing process helps to determine if the adverse result represents a widespread problem (ie. multiple or repeat adverse results across the system), or whether it is an anomaly," he explained. "In either case, the regulation requires that two sets of re-samples (each set consisting of a sample taken at the same location as the adverse result was found plus upstream and downstream for a total of three samples) have negative or "clean" results before the problem can be considered resolved."

Halton's water quality reports are available at <http://halton.ca/PPW/Water/DrinkingWater/WaterQuality.htm>.

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Where does our drinking water come from?

Halton's approximately 450,000 residents get their drinking water from a variety of sources.

The Region, not the local municipalities, is responsible for supplying such drinking water to those in urban-served areas without private wells.

The vast majority of the population, essentially residents of Burlington, Oakville and the parts of Milton developed over the last decade, get their water from the Region's South Halton water distribution system.

That system is supplied with treated water from the Burlington and Oakville Water Purification Plants (WPP).

The Burloak WPP is expected to come online this year and start supplying the same distribution system. All three plants draw raw water from Lake Ontario.

Residents of the older parts of Milton get drinking water that's groundwater-based: two well fields, Kelso and Walker's Line, take water from a sand and gravel aquifer system.

The water from the Kelso wells goes to the Kelso WPP and is then pumped to the Milton Reservoir, then fed by gravity into the Milton distribution system.

Water from the Walker's Line wells is disinfected and pumped to the Milton Surge Tank off No. 12 Sideroad before falling into the Milton distribution system.

About 140 residents in Campbellville get drinking water from the Campbellville Well Supply, which consists of two wells. The water is disinfected and stored in four pressure tanks that maintain pressure in the distribution system.

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