

Halton moves quickly to defend its water quality

By **ANGELA BLACKBURN**
The Champion

Halton Region is defending its drinking water after the Provincial Auditor's annual report recently cast a murky shadow on the quality of Ontario's drinking water.

"Halton would never distribute water that does not meet its high standards," said regional Chair Peter Pomeroy in a statement issued following the provincial report.

"Halton Region is fully in compliance with the provincial certificates of approval for all the (water purification) plants operating throughout Halton," stated Mr. Pomeroy.

Vince Suffoletta, director of plant operations for Halton's water system, said he was receiving calls from people concerned about health, their babies, even from worried pregnant women. "That's not right, it's not fair," he said.

"I can't stress enough that people should not be concerned. If anyone wants to talk to me, I'd be more than happy to talk to them, to address groups, to have visits to the facilities. I'm extremely proud of the people who operate this system. They're professionals and the minute there's a hint there may be a problem, we act," he said.

"There should be no concern.

'Permanent chlorination of the Milton water supply needs to be discussed.'

Dr. Robert Nosal, Halton's Medical Officer of Health

People in this region are getting the highest quality of water," stressed Mr. Suffoletta.

Mr. Suffoletta said Milton's water supply, which isn't chlorinated, is constantly tested and if initial tests register fecal coliform counts (contamination) above allowable standards (readings of zero), a second test is

run, both the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment and Energy are notified, the water is re-sampled and if positive, the system is chlorinated, sampled and chlorinated until the readings are clear.

Halton Region's health and public works staff are also preparing a report on the possibility of chlorinating

Milton's water, as in all other Halton municipalities. Halton's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Nosal, advised earlier this fall that another serious look be taken at chlorinating Milton's water.

"Permanent chlorination of the Milton water supply needs to be discussed," said Dr. Nosal in a September 28 memo to Halton regional councillors.

Regulations, as of May, got tougher on total coliform readings in water samples.

Total coliform is a bacteria group used as a water quality indicator. It's an indication of inadequate disinfection (signalling potential for disease-causing bacteria to get into the water) and is different from fecal coliform bacteria, which represents a definite contamination.

Last year a regional report on Milton's water said the supply routinely contains more total coliform bacteria than chlorinated supplies, however, the levels were still generally below the maximum allowable under provincial guidelines.

The report said an unchlorinated water supply is more prone to contamination by supply line breaks and construction. That happened here earlier this fall when a broken watermain along Derry Road led to an advisory for about 450 south Milton residents to boil their water.

"Chlorination, in my mind, is a positive thing if it's done right. It's what's done in all the other facilities in the region. The reason we add chlorine is to disinfect and prevent situations which currently happen in the Milton supply, from happening," said Mr. Suffoletta.

The Region has emergency chlorination facilities at Kelso reservoir. "We are currently pursuing putting the same thing at the Walker's Line well," said Mr. Suffoletta, noting the Region can use portable chlorination equipment when necessary.

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