

Strict monitoring required for several regional wells

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Tougher monitoring requirements for several municipal wells are the result of heightened diligence rather than real health threats, according to York Region officials.

Regional wells in Whitchurch-Stouffville, Sharon/Queensville, Kleinburg and Ansnorveldt were among 205 across the province identified as having the potential to be affected by surface water. The province has ordered the installation of 24-hour automated monitoring systems to immediately detect any contamination.

Transportation and works commissioner Kees Schipper said such monitoring systems are already in place here.

"We have a continuous chlorine feed at all the region's wells. An alarm system activates if there's any problem with that feed," Mr. Schipper said.

"If there was a problem, the pump is immediately shut down from a central control panel and a staff member would be dis-

patched to correct it immediately."

The provincial directive came after analysis of engineering reports filed last year. The province looked for factors that could lead to contamination of well water from surface sources.

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Mr. Schipper said the region is following ministry procedures on all its wells and conducting hydrogeological studies to pinpoint any potential for contamination from surface water.

Surface water was identified as the source of the deadly bacteria that infected a municipal well in Walkerton, leading to seven deaths and illness among thousands of residents.

In the wake of Walkerton and a lengthy inquiry, the province introduced stringent monitoring and quality standards on municipal water works.

Those criteria led to the identification of several of the region's wells, said Debbie Korolnek, director for water and wastewater.

"Where there was the least suspicion or chance there might be some effect from surface water, those wells were identified," she said. "They're identified as potential candidates."

Among the criteria applied by the province were depth of wells and their proximity to surface water or water courses, Ms Korolnek said. The province also looked for changes to water quality that could be caused by contamination by surface water.

Of the wells identified here, the Kleinburg well is not regularly used, Mr. Schipper said, adding the Queensville and Sharon wells are quite deep and not likely to be affected by surface water.

A boil water advisory remains in effect for the 50 residences in King Township served by the Ansnorveldt well. The region was ordered to assume the well a year ago and is taking remedial action.

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Four years ago, Tom Neo was hired to reinvent the Used Car Department at North Pointe Chev Olds in Markham. Previously, Mr. Neo had sold new GM cars and trucks, but his used car experience was limited. Nonetheless, he was determined to make the used car department a success.

Mr. Neo added new sales staff and expanded the dealership's used car inventory. "We also decided to focus our efforts on the customer experience," says Mr. Neo, who is General Sales Manager and Used Car Manager at North Pointe Chev Olds. "We wanted to give people a compelling reason to visit our dealership, and to want to come back."

Mr. Neo and his staff learned to be resourceful. They worked hard to build the business, one customer at a time. The North Pointe team seized every opportunity to enhance the customer experience, even going so far as to use the dealership's small showroom as a marketing strategy: "The Little Dealership with the Big Heart" became North Pointe's popular slogan, which is still used today.

The formula worked, and in four years North Pointe has tripled its used car business. Today, North Pointe sells approximately 30-40 used vehicles per month, which is more than any other dealership in Markham. In the Economist & Sun's 2001 Readers' Choice awards, North

Pointe was #1 in the category of Best Used Car Dealer.

"We're honoured with this award," says Mr. Neo. "It's a great accomplishment, and it's a true reflection of the dedication and commitment of our entire staff."

North Pointe's used car department is committed to providing customers with the highest quality cars and trucks. "Our standards ensure that any vehicle you receive is fully reconditioned and certified," says Tom. "If we do not have the vehicle you're looking for, we will make every effort to find it."

To accommodate the steady growth of North Pointe's used car department, the dealership will add a larger sales office, expand its used car inventory to 50-60 cars, and hire another used car salesperson.

Another advantage for customers is North Pointe's multi-cultural sales force, which speaks many languages, including French, Chinese, Ukrainian, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Polish and Macedonian. Whatever a customer's native language, a North Pointe sales representative can be counted on to make all customers feel welcome and completely at home.

A big focus of North Pointe Chev Olds is giving back to the community that has always been so supportive of the dealership. When the present owners purchased the dealership five years ago, they made giving back to the community a big part of their corporate mandate. Since 1996, the dealership has increased its visibility within Markham and has played an important role in the continued growth of the area.

North Pointe is a major supporter of the Markham Waxers hockey organization. It also supports the Markham Fair, the Markham Village Festival, Markham-Stouffville Hospital, parades, sports teams and other events. Curtis-E-Bear, the company mascot, is often seen in attendance at the many events around town.

North Pointe Chev Olds is located at 5336 Highway 7 East in Markham. They can be reached at (905) 294-1440. Their web site is at www.autonet.ca/NorthPointe.