

Clause 21 in Report No. 5 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on March 26, 2015.

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York Region Small Drinking Water Systems Program Update

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendation contained in the report dated February 18, 2015 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services and Medical Officer of Health:

1. Recommendation

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

2. Purpose

This report is prepared for Council in order for it to carry out its legislative duties and responsibilities as the Board of Health under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. It provides an updated inventory of small drinking water systems throughout York Region.

3. Background

Small drinking water systems are regulated by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and fall under the responsibility of local public health units

Prior to November 30, 2008, small drinking water systems (SDWS) were regulated by the Ministry of the Environment, under Ontario Regulation 252/05 under the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*. However, on December 1, 2008, responsibility for small drinking water systems was transferred to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). At that time, new small drinking water systems regulations under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* came into effect.

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Recommendations resulting from the Walkerton Commission of Inquiry led to the formation of the 'Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality and Testing Standards' (Advisory Council). The purpose of the Advisory Council was to provide advice and recommendations on the suitability of the regulation for Small Drinking Water Systems. The Advisory Council made a number of recommendations for change, which included the recommendation that public health inspectors conduct site-specific risk assessments for SDWS.

Small drinking water systems are non-residential systems and seasonal residential systems

Businesses or premises that do not get their drinking water from a municipal drinking water system, and that make drinking water available to the public, are considered to be a SDWS. The five categories of small drinking water systems that were transferred from the Ministry of the Environment to the MOHLTC are:

- Large municipal non-residential drinking water systems that serve such facilities as municipally-owned airports and industrial parks, and large sports and recreation facilities.
- Small municipal non-residential drinking water systems that serve such facilities as small community centres, libraries, and sports and recreation facilities.
- Non-municipal seasonal residential drinking water systems that serve such facilities as private cottages on communal drinking water systems.
- Large non-municipal non-residential drinking water systems that serve such facilities as large motels and resorts.
- Small non-municipal non-residential drinking water systems that serve such facilities as golf courses, motels, restaurants, gas stations, churches, and bed and breakfasts.

Systems serving designated facilities such as children's camps, health care facilities, social care facilities, schools, universities, colleges or other degree-granting institutions are not considered SDWS and remain under Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

#### 4. Analysis and Options

Small drinking water systems are classified as high, moderate or low risk based on various factors that affect water safety

Public Health conducts risk assessments of small drinking water systems using a Risk Categorization Tool. Developed by the Province, the tool consists of 80 questions; however the response to some of these can trigger an additional 20 questions to be addressed. The Risk Categorization Tool assesses the following:

- Source water (well, lake)
- Sample history (laboratory-confirmed bacteriological water results)
- Treatment/distribution (UV light, chlorination)
- Operations (complexity of system, training certificate)
- Users (access to drinking water)

This risk categorization determines the required frequency of inspection (once every two years for high risk systems, and once every four years for low and moderate risk systems). In some cases, it is possible for a system to change risk level by addressing specific factors listed above.

Assessments determine what owners and operators must do to keep their drinking water safe. Directives may include requirements such as water testing, treatment and training, specifically tailored for each individual owner and operator, rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

The number of small drinking water systems in the Region classified as high risk has declined from 53 to 3

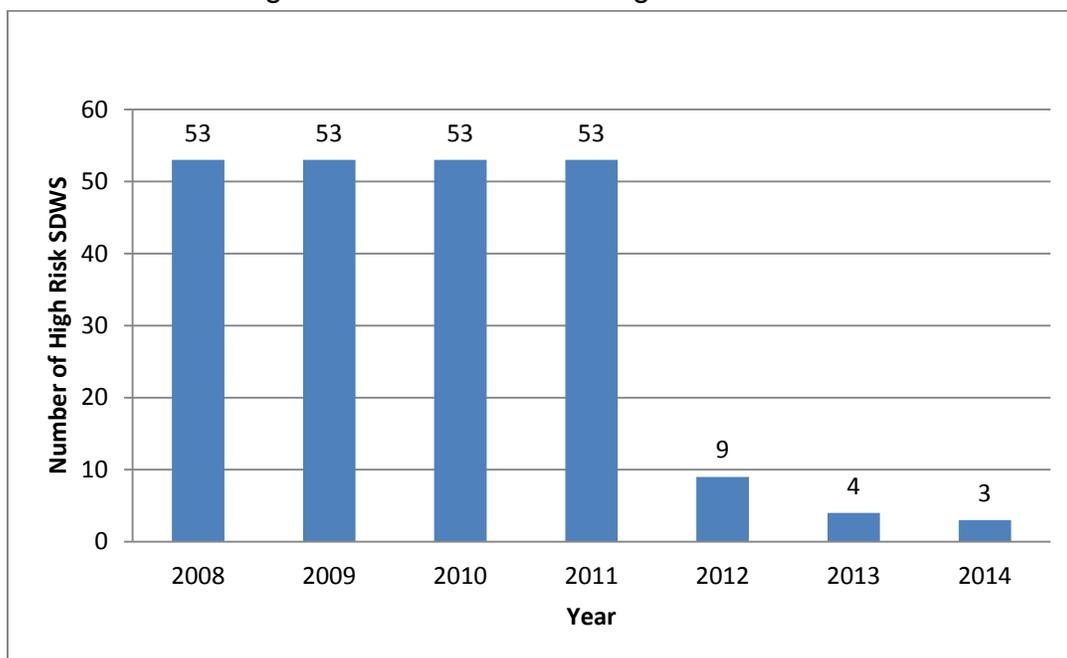
York Region has a total of 310 SDWS based on the last risk assessments completed. As a result of operators continuing to follow best practice, the number of high risk SDWS has declined from 53 SDWS in 2008 to three SDWS as of October 2014. Table 1 provides a breakdown of SDWS by municipality and risk category and Chart 1 illustrates the number of high risk systems from 2008 to 2014.

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Table 1  
Breakdown of Systems by Municipality and Risk Category

| Municipality           | Low        | Moderate  | High     |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|----------|
| Aurora                 | 3          | 0         | 0        |
| East Gwillimbury       | 37         | 12        | 1        |
| Georgina               | 54         | 20        | 0        |
| King                   | 52         | 10        | 0        |
| Markham                | 27         | 5         | 0        |
| Newmarket              | 0          | 0         | 0        |
| Richmond Hill          | 12         | 3         | 0        |
| Vaughan                | 14         | 1         | 0        |
| Whitchurch-Stouffville | 51         | 6         | 2        |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>250</b> | <b>57</b> | <b>3</b> |

Chart 1  
High Risk SDWS in York Region from 2008-2014



Systems that are classified as high risk do not necessarily mean that the operator is non-compliant with public health requirements. For example, where a new business has opened, it is not possible to have a twelve-month sampling history. In this case, the owner has the option to sample the water on a weekly basis for

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a 12-month period, and remain classified as high risk, or, the operator can purchase a water treatment system, such as UV, and immediately drop to a lower risk rating. A number of the high-risk premises dropped their risk categorizations by following the directives provided in their assessments, including building up a regular sampling history, receiving operator training, and/or installing proper treatment devices.

Owners and operators of small drinking water systems are responsible for meeting their legislative requirements

Currently, all owners and operators of SDWS are responsible for keeping their drinking water safe and meeting legislative requirements. Responsibilities include providing treatment; conduct microbiological and chemical testing through routine water sampling; keeping accurate records and reporting all adverse drinking water quality incidents (such as unsatisfactory bacteriological and/or chemical test results, no disinfection, power outage, etc.) to their local health unit.

Local municipalities, who own or operate SDWS, are also responsible for maintaining and monitoring these systems. Examples of municipally owned SDWS are community halls, libraries, ball parks, arenas and large sport complexes. Currently there are 16 municipally owned SDWS in York Region - one in the Town of East Gwillimbury; eight in the Town of Georgina; five in the Township of King; and two in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. All these systems are assessed as low risk.

[Link to key Council-approved plans](#)

This report directly contributes to supporting the *2015-2019 Strategic Plan* objective to “support community health and well-being” and “protecting public health”, supporting the completion of the key Regional performance measure of “maintaining percentage of samples that meet the Ontario Drinking Water Standard”.

5. Financial Implications

In 2014, the SDWS program had gross expenditures of \$103,294. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided 75% cost share funding up to a maximum subsidy of \$58,700. The remaining \$44,594 was funded through Regional Tax Levy as approved in the 2014 Regional budget.

6. Local Municipal Impact

Small drinking water systems owned or operated by local municipalities, such as community halls, libraries, ball parks, arenas and large sport complexes, will continue to be subject to the requirements outlined in Ontario Regulation 319/08.

7. Conclusion

Public Health staff will continue to fulfil its mandated inspections and routine risk assessment requirements for all SDWS throughout York Region. In accordance with the Accountability Agreement with the MOHLTC, York Region Public Health will continue to report on the percentage of high-risk SDWS inspections completed for those that are due for re-inspection.

For more information on this report, please contact Joe La Marca, Director, Health Protection at ext. 74025 or Bernard Mayer, Manager, Health Protection at ext. 74590.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request