

Chief Drinking Water Inspector's 2007-2008 Annual Report

June 26, 2009

Ontario's Chief Drinking Water Inspector has released his fourth annual report on the performance of municipal and other regulated drinking water systems and laboratories licensed to perform drinking water testing. The report details actions the ministry has taken to protect drinking water between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. It shows that our safety net gives Ontario residents the confidence that their regulated drinking water systems are delivering safe, high quality tap water.

KEY RESULTS FOR 2007-2008

- 99.85 per cent of drinking water tests reported by municipal residential drinking water systems met Ontario's rigorous, health-based drinking water quality standards during the year. These systems serve more than 80 per cent of Ontario's population. Municipalities conducted more than 520,000 of these tests
- 99.39 per cent of the tests reported by systems serving designated facilities such as day cares, schools or health care facilities met provincial standards
- 99.40 per cent of the tests reported by non-municipal year-round residential systems met provincial standards. These private systems serve residential developments, campgrounds and trailer parks

ONTARIO'S DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

During 2007-08, the ministry received more than 650,000 drinking water test results from laboratories licensed to perform drinking water testing. These tests determine if treated drinking water meets the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards.

The standards include 158 health-related standards for microbiological, chemical and radiological levels. Ontario's standards are based on Health Canada's Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines. The standards are re-evaluated every five years to ensure they are up-to-date.

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

The Ontario government has taken action to address lead in drinking water through the Lead Action Plan. The 2007-08 report provides the first results of tests for lead in drinking water in schools, day cares and communities. Overall test results and compliance was good. The results show that flushing works. The lead concentration was lower in drinking water samples that were taken after the system had been flushed.

The first round of community testing (done between December 15, 2007 and April 15, 2008) found that the majority of samples taken at municipal and private residential drinking water systems met Ontario's standard for lead.

The report shows that the sampling and testing requirements put in place to identify higher than acceptable levels of lead in drinking water and to ensure steps are taken to protect health, are working.

MUNICIPAL LICENSING

As of January 1, 2009, all owners of municipal residential drinking water systems in Ontario must apply for a municipal drinking water licence from the ministry to operate their systems. The province's groundbreaking new licensing program for municipal drinking water systems incorporates the first quality-management system of its kind in North America, and builds continuous improvement into day-to-day operations. It holds owners to a high standard of operating and managing their drinking water systems.

The licence is issued to the owner once five elements of the program are in place including permits to take water, how the system operates, and financial planning for the future.

RATING MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL DRINKING WATER SYSTEM OPERATIONS

The report provides inspection ratings for municipal residential drinking water systems. Inspection ratings are a tool designed to indicate how well the operation of a system is doing against Ontario's inspection framework. The rating offers a snapshot of a system's operation at the time of inspection.

Overall, the operational performance of municipal residential drinking water systems is very good. The majority— 95 per cent—of inspection ratings were 90 per cent or better, up three per cent from 2006-07.

A lower inspection rating does not mean the drinking water from the system is unsafe. It indicates where a system's operation can improve. The ministry works with owners and operators of lower rated systems to ensure they know how they can achieve full compliance.

The inspection ratings help track yearly progress toward the goal of 100 per cent compliance for all systems in the province. This year, the number of municipal residential drinking water systems demonstrating 100 per cent compliance increased by 10 per cent over 2006-07. Fifty per cent of the ratings were 100 per cent.