



PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Regional Municipality of Niagara

INSPECTION DIVISION

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February 2003

Dear Resident and/or Property Owner:

Re: Regularly Test and Monitor Your Private Drinking Water Supply

Recently, a study was undertaken by the Regional Municipality of Niagara along with the Township of Wainfleet to assess the natural groundwater quality for the communities of Long Beach, Bellevue Beach, Morgan's Point and Camelot Beach. Results from the 128 properties surveyed showed bacterial contamination and elevated nitrate levels in a significant number of private water supplies (i.e.: wells) and also revealed problems with septic system maintenance.

Based on this information, all lakeshore property owners in Wainfleet who rely on private water supplies, such as drilled wells, dug wells, rain-fed cisterns, or lake water, are advised to:

- 1) Test the drinking water supply at least six times per year or more frequently should bacterial problems be detected.
- 2) Ensure that a Canadian Standards Association (C.S.A.) approved water treatment device is in place and working properly in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- 3) Avoid using the water to mix infant formula until it is tested and found that nitrate levels are less than 10 mg/L (milligrams per litre).

If you are not already doing so, please take these steps to ensure a safe drinking water supply for family members, especially young children and the elderly, visitors and/or tenants.

This advisement does not apply to residents who receive their drinking water from a communal water system (i.e.: Long Beach residents), as that water supply is regulated by the Ministry of the Environment.

The Public Health Department would also like to provide additional information on the topics listed here.

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A) Treatment Devices

All private water supplies should have properly functioning and maintained treatment devices such as chlorinators or Ultra Violet light systems to kill harmful bacteria. These treatment devices should also be routinely checked to ensure that they are working in compliance with manufacturers' instructions. Hence the need for regular water testing. Because certain organisms (cysts or viruses) in water may not be eliminated by disinfection, we also recommend filtration. Where the water is cloudy, Ultra Violet light systems may not function as intended and the addition of a filtration system is essential.

B) Nitrates

Nitrates are the end result of a chemical reaction, they are not bacteria. The presence of nitrates in well water is usually the result of seepage from septic tanks or farming activities like fertilizing. Infants less than six months old can become sick from drinking formula mixed with water high in nitrates. The nitrates in the formula reduce the amount of oxygen carried by the blood and can cause "blue-baby syndrome" (methaemoglobinemia). Private labs can carry out chemical water testing for the presence of nitrates. Please check your Yellow Pages for the closest lab.

C) Septic Systems

Ongoing maintenance of septic systems is required, including regular pumping of septic tank solids at least once every two years. More frequent pump out or repairs may be required in cases where systems are overloaded and effluent collects and ponds on the ground surface or plumbing fixtures are slow to drain. In all cases, only licensed sewage haulers and pump out contractors are to be used.

D) Cisterns

Cisterns filled only with municipally hauled water should also be routinely monitored and the water sampled.

E) Landlord Responsibilities

Persons leasing or renting accommodation (cottages, rental units, and housing) are legally required to provide tenants and seasonal renters with a potable (healthy and safe) water supply.

The Public Health Department provides free sample bottles for bacterial water testing. Bottles with instructions for sample collection are available at the municipal offices in Wainfleet Village and at all Public Health Department offices, the closest to you being the Welland Public Health Department office at 540 King Street. Samples must be dropped off at the public health office the same day they are collected, Monday to Thursday. Public health inspectors are available to review results that test positive for bacteria and to provide advice to ensure a safe drinking water supply.

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Should you have any questions about drinking water safety or septic system maintenance, please call the Inspection Division at the Welland office at 905-735-5697 or the St. Catharines office at 905-688-8248 ext. 7247 or 1-888-505-6074. Please visit the Public Health Department web pages at www.regional.niagara.on.ca for more information.

The report summarizing the past study's results was prepared by MacViro Consulting Inc. and is called: "*Wainfleet Groundwater Impact Assessment Water Well and Septic System Survey, November, 2002*". Copies of the main body of the report will be available at the Wainfleet municipal offices and the town library.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

Dennis Beresh
Manager, Health Protection and Promotion
For: Robin Williams, M.D., D.P.H., F.R.C.P.(C)
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Encl: Fact Sheet on Private Water Safety for Lakeshore Property Owners, Wainfleet

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