

# WATER PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

WHAT YOU SAID IN 2019

WATER SERVICES  
[york.ca/wateris](http://york.ca/wateris)

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized bird or wing icon above the text "York Region".

York Region



This report summarizes residents' thoughts, opinions and impressions gathered through The Regional Municipality of York's online Water Perceptions Survey. The survey was available online from August 3 to September 16, 2019.

This report outlines what we asked and how you responded, and identifies the key themes we heard throughout. It also explains what the Region is doing to address your concerns and how we will continue to deliver safe, clean and affordable drinking water.

### **SURVEY BACKGROUND**

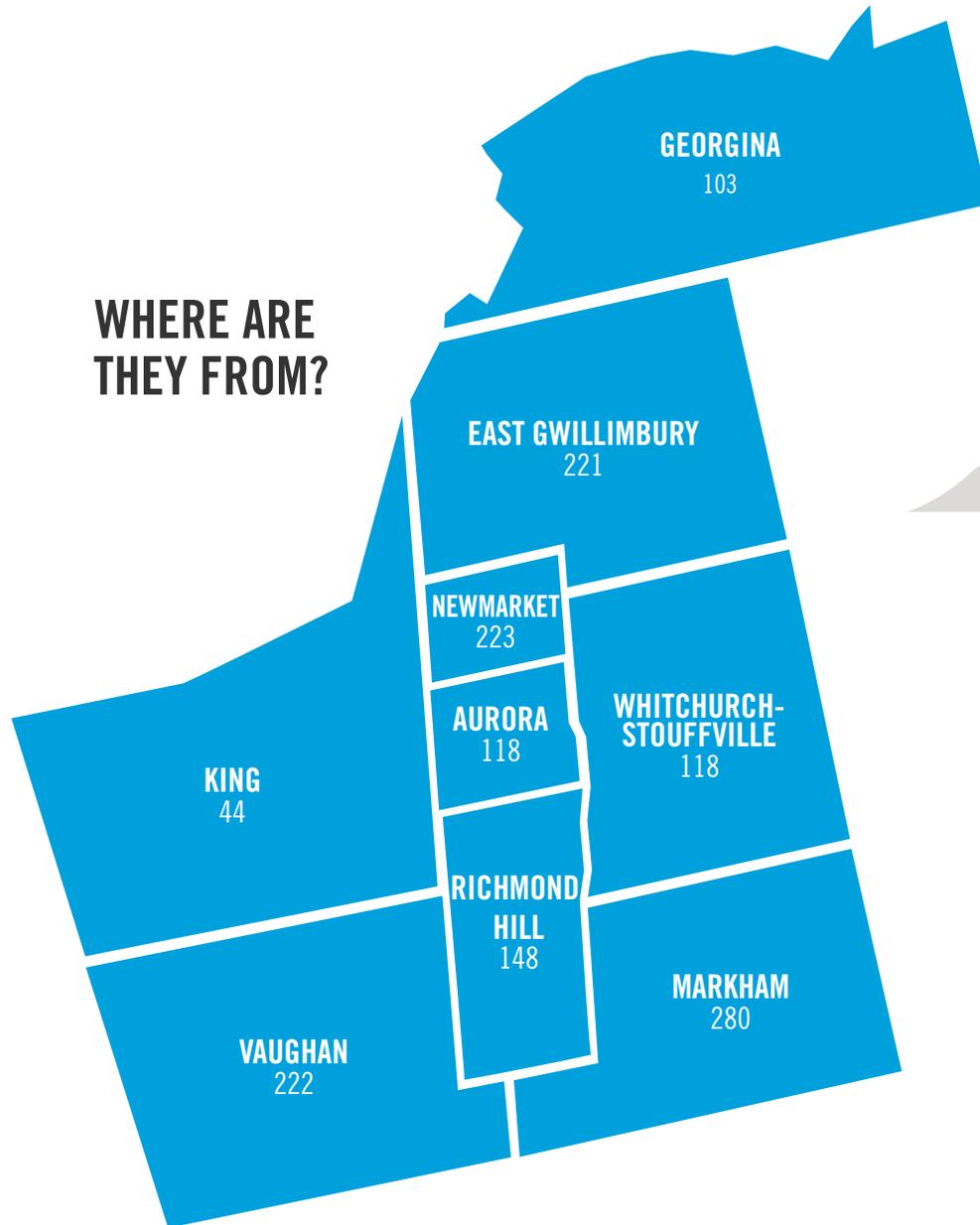
The purpose of the Water Perceptions Survey was to ask residents about their thoughts and opinions regarding water and wastewater in York Region now and for the future.

The survey allowed the Region to get a deeper understanding of residents' priority issues, concerns and questions surrounding water and wastewater, which will inform ongoing program development and an update of the [Water and Wastewater Master Plan](#), which started in August of 2019.

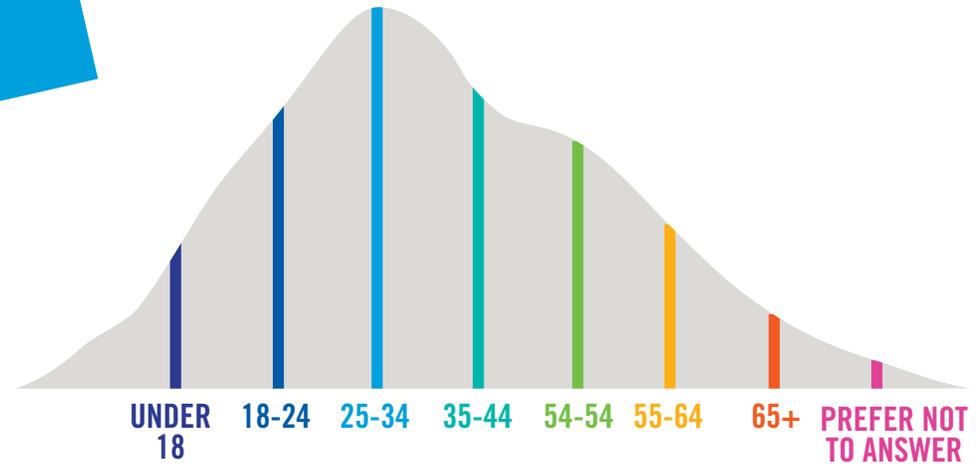
# WHO WE HEARD FROM

The Water Perceptions Survey had a total of 1,676 survey respondents. Submissions from residents outside of York Region, along with blank responses, were removed. This brought the total to 1,477 respondents.

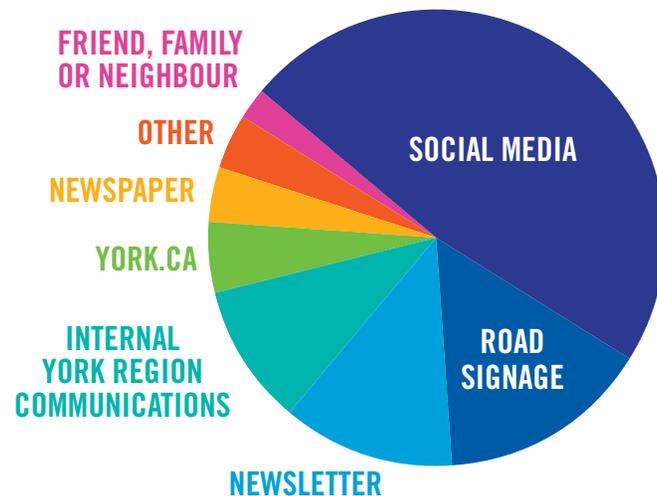
## WHERE ARE THEY FROM?



## HOW OLD ARE THEY?



## HOW DID THEY HEAR ABOUT THE SURVEY?



# WHAT WE ASKED

We asked the following six questions:

1. What do you value about your water?
2. What do you value about your wastewater?
3. What concerns you about your water today?
4. What concerns you about your wastewater?
5. What concerns you about the future of your water?
6. What does safe water mean to you?

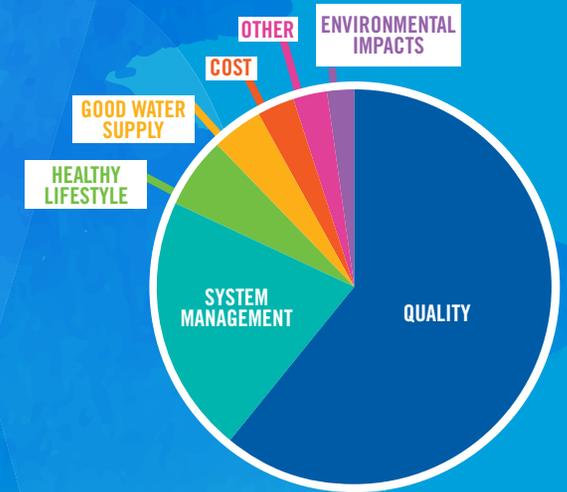
The responses to these questions are summarized by themes in this report. Questions three to five include two additional sections to describe actions the Region is taking to address concerns and how residents can help support these actions.



## Question 1:

# WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT YOUR WATER?

We want it, we use it, we need it. Our water has value for so many reasons and we are glad to see you recognize that.



## QUALITY (61%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That it is safe to drink and with abundant supply."

"I'm happy that our water is clean and drinkable (and tastes good too)."

"The quality of water is great. I always drink the tap water instead of bottled water."

"The quality is very high and I trust I can drink directly from the tap."

"I value that the water we have is clean and we can drink directly from the tap. I value that it's affordable and easily accessible. It's also important to know that the city takes care to ensure the quality of water."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are happy with the taste and quality of the water that York Region provides.**

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (21%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Good pressure coming out of the tap, no funny odour or taste to it."

"I value that my water is available to me when required, that it is clean, safe to consume and appreciate it is taken well care of by individuals within my community."

"Accessibility and accountability - I love being able to turn on a tap and trust that water will come out, and be safe to drink."

"I value the accessibility I have to fresh water at any time. It's a privilege some don't have."

"The fact that York Region is reliable and professional and provides continuous clean, great tasting water and the quantity that is available to its residents."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are happy with the way the water system is being managed and you appreciate the convenience of having clean water available out of your tap.**

## HEALTHY LIFESTYLE (6%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"First of all it keeps us all alive and it's good for our bodies. Its uses are endless: baths, washing clothes and cars, cleaning the house and foods and its loads of fun to play in at the beach or backyard pool."

"Clean and safe to drink. Lakes that are safe for swimming."

"It is the source of life. We can't do without it. Our water is drinkable from the tap. We are so lucky."

"It is a necessity for life."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You recognize that water is an essential part of life and it helps keep you healthy.**

## GOOD WATER SUPPLY (4%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That I can trust that it's clean, accessible, and plentiful – We are truly blessed to have access to this "liquid gold"."

"It's clean, tastes great, refreshing, easily accessible and so reasonable. We are truly blessed in Canada, York Region to have such a bountiful water supply. We are envied by most of the world for our most cherished resource!"

"Water is the most valuable resource we have, therefore it should be managed responsibly to ensure future generations and the environment can enjoy the benefits of abundant and clean water sources."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel lucky to have such an ample and abundant supply of water.**

## COST (3%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"It's availability and relatively low cost. I drink it every day and value that it is easily accessible."

"The fact that we have access to the cleanest water in the world at our fingertips at an extremely reasonable cost."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You believe the price of water is reasonable for the service you receive.**

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (2%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"It's clean and abundant. I am concerned about educating people not to waste it."

"Water is the most important thing in the world. So we should use it wisely."

"Clean and safe - abundant - I value protection of our water sources."

"Source protection (protecting and ensuring water resources for local flora and fauna as well clean water for human consumption)."

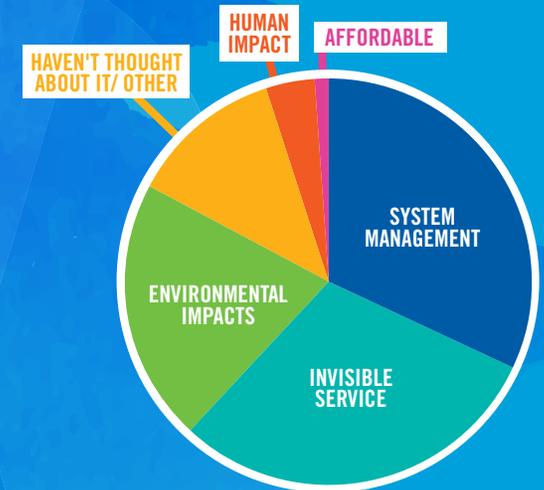
### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You care about the environment and feel we should be protecting our water sources and using water wisely.**

## Question 2:

# WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT YOUR WASTEWATER?

Washing, rinsing and flushing, our water is used and then sent away. Our sophisticated system makes this luxury a reality and it is important to you, your families and your neighbourhoods.



### SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (32%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That it is properly cleaned and filtered before being released back into the environment."

"No service interruptions, minimal environmental impact and clean effluent discharged."

"That it is maintained properly and by skilled people."

"The water is properly treated and the systems that carry the water away are always in good repair."

"I value the system that is in place (infrastructure and expertise) to take care of my wastewater so I don't have to."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You appreciate how well the system is managed and are happy with the quality of service.**

### INVISIBLE SERVICE (30%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"The best part of the wastewater system is that it's hidden with no traces (odour, gas, etc) to the public."

"That it keeps flowing out of my house (i.e. doesn't back up)."

"Operating smoothly - no issue."

"That the wastewater system is dependable and hygienic to flush away waste without complications of blockages or backup."

"It goes away and I don't need to think about it."

"I don't have to think twice about it, so it's trusted and reliable; you realize how important it is when you don't have it."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You appreciate that wastewater services are available and reliable which means you don't have to worry about them – out of sight, out of mind.**

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (21%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"I value that we can do more research on how to re-use water and decrease water consumption in every part of our community."

"That it is managed properly and doesn't get dumped into vulnerable ecosystems."

"That is it being disposed of responsibly, efficiently and in the most environmentally friendly manner."

"I believe wastewater is just as vital as freshwater itself. It needs to be disposed of properly. Maybe it can be reused if sanitized properly."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You like that wastewater is treated appropriately and doesn't impact the environment. We also heard you would like us to look into more water reuse opportunities.**

## HUMAN IMPACT

(10%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"I try to reduce the amount of wastewater I produce, I don't like wasting."

"I was surprised to learn about what does or does not go down the drain and toilets and I consider myself someone who reads and tries to be environmentally conscious. I think it's very important to find ways to get this information out to the larger number of residents."

"Remembering to be aware of my usage to reduce over usage. Being cautious of what I pour down the drain to reduce my impact on the environment."

"It is important to not dispose garbage, tissue, medicines, etc. as they can block sewers and proper care should be taken and maintain safe disposal."

"That it doesn't contain anything other than poo, pee, and toilet paper so that it can be properly processed and not damage the environment."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**Some of you are careful about how much wastewater you are producing and what you are putting down the drain. You would also like to see more education around these issues.**

## AFFORDABLE

(1%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Quick removal and affordability."

"That it is taken care of in an efficient, cost effective and environmentally responsible way."

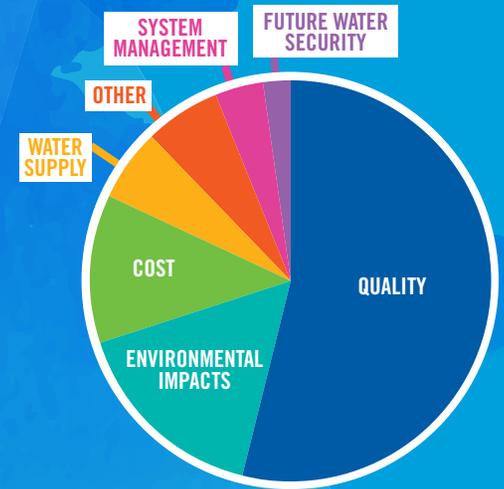
### WHAT WE HEARD:

**Some of you are happy with the cost of wastewater services.**

## Question 3:

# WHAT CONCERNS YOU ABOUT YOUR WATER TODAY?

You don't want to worry but you want to be aware. Many small actions can make a big difference and we all play a part in protecting our water resources.



## QUALITY

(54%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Sometimes it smells bad. It always tastes bad, I would never drink it without boiling it first."

"Is EXTREMELY hard and LOTS of Iron. It doesn't taste all that great."

"It is brown. A lot of the time. When I called to complain I was told it is high iron and safe to drink. I would not drink a glass of brown water. Nor do I want to bathe kids in brown water or shower in it myself."

"It is hard, yellow and unsafe to drink, it is ruining my toilets and faucets."

"That there is white cloud when you first put it in a cup which is concerning. Hopefully there are no particles, minerals or bacteria in it."

"Although we think the water is safe to drink, it would be good if the city does random testing in the area to confirm its still safe to drink as I know some families drink filtered water or bottled water instead of tap water."

"It is heavily chlorinated!! I do NOT drink town water nor do I cook with it. I wish I didn't have to shower in it. There are better ways to clean water rather than chlorine or whatever else you use."

"That it continues to be clean enough to drink with the increased pollution and other additives including pharmaceuticals."

"It smells like chemicals. I have to use a filter in the shower because chlorine irritates my skin. I have to drink bottled or boiled water because I hate the smell of the chemicals."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel the water is hard, can be discoloured and sometimes has an unpleasant taste and/or smell.**

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (16%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"A lot of chemicals (traces of hormones, drugs, cannabis) can be found in GTA water and that amount is steadily increasing."

"Global warming and microplastics might compromise the integrity of our tap water."

"The fact is there many more pesticides and medications that are not and cannot be removed from our drinking water. The fact remains these chemicals are affecting our health (hormones, psychiatric drugs, glyphosate, opioids etc). Polluters who release fertilizers and pesticide into Lake Simcoe aren't being fined."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned that chemicals and microplastics may enter our water supply, which could have a negative impact on the environment.**

## COST (12%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"The way the billing works – there is very little incentive to conserve as the overwhelming costs are fixed and independent of water usage. I could be away for the entire month yet still have a bill that is not much less than if i was home all month."

"It's getting very expensive. Don't like that I'm billed a flat rate plus usage."

"Overly cheap: insufficient budgeting for long term, ie 20, 50, 100 year plans for infrastructure and environmental issues. No economic incentive to save water; it's cheap."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel water bills are expensive and the flat rate is frustrating and does not encourage people to conserve water. You are also concerned about long-term financial planning.**

## WATER SUPPLY (6%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Government cuts and environment policies that could affect water monitoring and sources."

"Possibility of shortage, contamination, not readily available."

"Sustainability and usage by laws to protect water for necessities (drinking, bathing)."

"Reduced access and availability due to climate change and population growth. Sale of natural water sources to multinational companies."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about the possibility of not having enough water/not having access to it.**

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (4%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Pipes that brings the water in to the city from Toronto into our homes, may be contaminated so although the purification process is done to standard, the supply pipes may not be clean."

"I am concerned about the material used for the pipes, if they are old and using lead or if they have been updated to health-safe materials. I am also concerned about chlorine and other chemical levels in the water."

"As more and more homes in the area are built, the water pressure has decreased significantly, to the point that the shower won't turn on as there isn't enough pressure to pull the water up."

"Whether there are regular tests and safety measures in place to ensure it is safe to drink."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about the state of the infrastructure and the testing performed to ensure your water is safe to drink.**

## FUTURE WATER SECURITY (2%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Not having enough to go around with all this growth locally."

"With increasing population, will the existing services be able to keep up?"

"Are we planning our resource use to ensure the same high quality and standards for future generations?"

"I am concerned that with the growth of York Region, that it will over load the system and the best water may not be available."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about the impact population growth will have on our water supply.**

# YOU TURN ON YOUR TAP, YOU CONNECT YOUR HOSE, YOU LOAD THE WASHING MACHINE... AND OUT COMES WATER

Water is an integral part of everyday life. A safe and reliable source of water is one of the keys to healthy thriving communities. York Region is surrounded by many natural sources of water, from Lake Simcoe in the north, to Lake Ontario to the south and our aquifers underground. Partnerships with our neighbouring municipalities support shared access to these resources.

To access and use these water sources, we need a system to extract, move, clean, monitor and distribute the water throughout York Region. This system is made up of pipes, pumps, plants, policies, procedures and people. An immense network of trained staff and technology make sure our water is always safe and useable.

Providing clean healthy drinking water begins with protecting the source. York Region has established — and maintains — a complex monitoring program to ensure the safety of our surface and groundwater resources. Our [Source Water Protection](#) plans use a multi-barrier approach to protect our water, which includes scientific research, hydrogeology studies, threat identification, regulatory requirements and community partnerships.

York Region follows strict government regulations to balance our water needs. We study and monitor the effect that our water consumption has on these natural water sources and regularly report our findings. This information is important to support long-term planning, growth and development and future supply demands on the system.

The goal of this work is to provide York Region residents and visitors with water that is safe and reliable for drinking and recreation, now and for future generations.

York Region residents can support a healthy water system by:

- **Knowing your home and its water systems**
  - The age and condition of your plumbing, any past issues, the use of aerators or water filters and their condition
  - Looking for tree roots around your home or past construction that has occurred, which can influence the quality of water entering your residence from the Municipal supply system
- **Being mindful**
  - Minimizing use of tap water to water your lawn and gardens, especially in the summer months. Every drop of water that comes out of a faucet, tap or hose has travelled through the York Region treatment system. Treated water requires resources and has a cost so limiting your water use means we do not have to treat and this can reduce costs
- **Considering rain water**
  - Consider landscaping opportunities (unpaved areas) on your property where rainwater can naturally go back into the ground and recharge underground supply
  - Support projects that protect natural spaces to allow for filtration, percolation and replenishment of underground sources

## dive deeper

**LEARN MORE** about our water system including the use of chlorine for disinfection, naturally occurring iron levels and the addition of fluoride

### DRINKING WATER

Learn where our water comes from, how we make sure it is safe and how we move it around with these **VIDEOS**

WATCH:  
▶ **SOURCE IT**

WATCH:  
▶ **TREAT IT**

WATCH:  
▶ **MOVE IT**

**MEET AARON WOOD,** Water Hero and go inside Georgina Water Treatment Plant



It might not be easy to see, but you can **JOIN PHIL HARRISON** as he keeps an eye on our groundwater supply



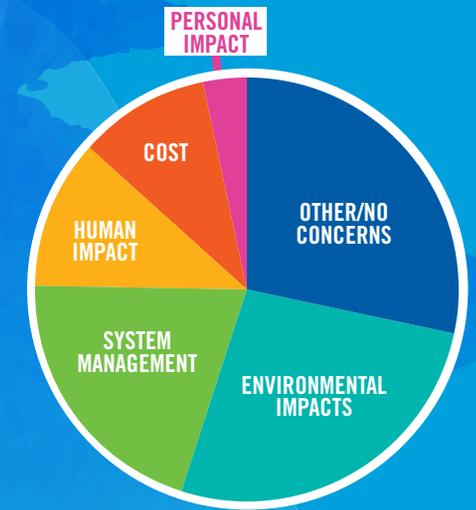
Do you know how much water you use in a day? Learn about actual and virtual water in **A DAY IN THE LIFE**



## Question 4:

# WHAT CONCERNS YOU ABOUT YOUR WASTEWATER?

Not everything put into our wastewater is safe for the environment. It's important to understand how the system works in order to support its health and maintenance now and into the future.



## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

(24%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That it contains a lot of stuff that can't be completely removed and has a huge environmental impact - i.e. antibiotics, micro plastics, etc."

"... the full spectrum of chemicals, plastics, oils, grease, feces and pharmaceuticals that enter the wastewater system that makes it difficult to properly treat effluent."

"How is it being filtered? Where is it being disposed?"

"Where exactly does it go? Is it at all possible that it can contaminate the drinking water?"

"My concern is how it's affecting Lake Simcoe we want to have this lake to enjoy for years to come."

"That it is being collected and treated properly and in a way that is not detrimental to the environment."

"That we aren't spending enough time and resources to effectively use wastewater to our advantage."

"Spills, backups, contaminating safe water."

"I wonder where it goes and how expensive it is to make it re-useable."

"With climate change it seems we are getting bigger storms so want to ensure that all that water has somewhere to go and doesn't cause us to release untreated wastewater."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about how wastewater is treated, whether contaminants are properly removed and where it ends up.**

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

(20%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That it isn't being processed to a point where it is safe to be released back into our fresh water supply."

"Cleanliness. Especially with the amount of chemicals entering our water supplies."

"That eventually all of our water sources will be recycled water."

"Education around how it's treated, where it goes and if it's safe to drink, go through the cycle."

"How will products that wastewater treatment systems cannot easily address, such as wipes, impact my wastewater services?"

"Status of pipes – are they safe/reliable? even with impacts of climate change?"

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned with the level of treatment wastewater receives, the impact of population growth and if our infrastructure is capable of dealing with the effects of climate change.**

## HUMAN IMPACT

(11%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"The public needs to be educated about what can and cannot be disposed of down the drains/toilets and big corporations need heavy fines if polluting our water sources."

"I am concerned that some residents treat our sinks/ drains and stormwater drains as garbage disposals – this impacts all of us and our environment (FOGs, antibiotics, paints, chemicals, etc. down the drains)."

"York Region should run more campaigns about water usage and conservation, too many people take it for granted and waste it."

"I see the "FOG" vehicles out there and worry that the lesson isn't loud enough. There needs to be commercials and more advertising regarding this, solely because its such an easy lesson to forget or miss."

"That medications and drugs and pesticides are being discharged into our Lakes and rivers. Very sad. These dangerous chemicals cannot be removed. The public is not being informed of the risks."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You would like to learn more about what should and should not go down the drain and how you can reduce the amount of wastewater you produce.**

## COST

(11%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"High cost, and why should metered water used to water lawns and garden be included in the calculation for wastewater."

"Happy to hear about new variable pricing for amount of paved area on the property. A small step towards environmental stewardship. Are wastewater charges estimated on building plans? There is no economic incentive for homeowners to manage wastewater or make changes to property design to minimize runoff. The town is doing nothing to stop homeowners from paving everything. Bylaws are slow and reactive, and wastewater is cheap and makes no difference to behaviour."

"Find it odd that we pay a higher rate for wastewater than fresh and the assumption is made that the quantities are equal."

"I'm not sure how the cost for that is calculated. I know that I try very hard to use water in the most efficient way, putting as little used water into the system is possible."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel that wastewater costs are high and you are unsure how they are calculated.**

## PERSONAL IMPACT

(3%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"I am concerned that when it storms and there is minor flooding that the back up will come up into my home."

"I don't have any concerns, so long as it doesn't back up."

"If it won't get removed from my home."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned that there may be an impact on you in your home due to back-ups or service interruptions.**

# YOU FLUSH IT DOWN THE TOILET OR SEND IT DOWN THE DRAIN AND IT'S GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

Water is continually moving through the water cycle from liquid form in oceans, rivers, lakes and streams, to a gas or vapour through evaporation and transpiration (sweating plants), to condensation into clouds and back to liquid or solid as rain or snow. Throughout this process, we 'borrow' water to use before returning it to the cycle.

The Region's wastewater system is just as complex as our water cycle. Once you use water in your home, it leaves through the toilet, shower, sink, the washing machine or your dishwasher. All of this used water is collected in pipes and transported to a water resource recovery facility to be cleaned before returning to the environment.

This system is designed to transport and treat human waste, toilet paper, soapy water and rinse water. These items generally move fairly easily through the pipes and can be treated at our facilities. Rinsing fats, oils and greases down the drain, or flushing items such as wipes, can lead to a buildup in the pipes and blockages that cause system damage, basement flooding and spills. The proper disposal of these items is your green bin or garbage.

Rinsing household cleaners, paints or chemicals – including unused medications – down the drain can upset the biological processes that work to break down the waste and clean it before it leaves our facilities. Disposing of household cleaners and chemicals at a Hazardous Waste Depot and returning unused medication to a pharmacy or a [York Region Depot](#) helps maintain the wastewater system and delays costly upgrades and unnecessary repairs.

You can support the wastewater system by:

- **Conserving water**
  - Using less water in your home means that less wastewater goes down the drain and must be treated through the wastewater process. This saves resources and expenses
- **Properly disposing of products**
  - Consider what you buy, use and flush
  - Do not dispose of household cleaners down the drain. They can be taken to a [Household Hazardous Waste Depot](#) for proper disposal
  - Properly dispose of fats, oils and grease to minimize build up in the wastewater pipes
  - Only flush the 3 Ps: pee, poo and (toilet) paper



## dive deeper



Before retiring from York Region, **DIANE KING** spent many years making sure our wastewater treatment process was effective and efficient



Repairs, replacements, upgrades and maintenance... all in a days work for **LEE FERGUSON**



Protecting our infrastructure, treatment process and environment, join **JEN RYAN** as she enforces the Sewer-Use Bylaw



**VISIT DUFFIN CREEK WATER POLLUTION CONTROL PLANT** and see what is happening to your wastewater

Do you know what flushing personal care products can do? Toilets are not waste bins

Fats, oils and grease have a home, and it is not down your drain

**FIND OUT HERE**

**YORK.CA/FOG**

Icky, yucky and underground, nobody wants to go there but we could not do without our wastewater system

**DISCOVER MORE**

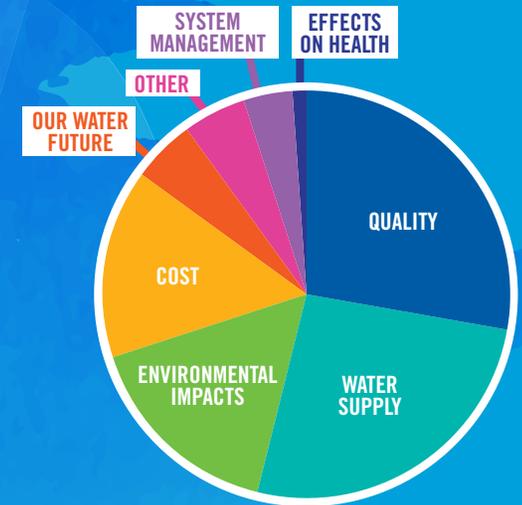
Learn more about our proactive planning for growth, development and servicing

**LEARN MORE**

## Question 5:

# WHAT CONCERNS YOU ABOUT THE FUTURE OF YOUR WATER?

You hope you can continue to rely on a safe supply of drinking water and natural resources for health, recreation and other uses.



## QUALITY

(28%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Whether the hard water issue will ever be addressed."

"That it gets better and cleaner and more natural tasting. That plastics don't enter the watershed."

"There's a supply and it works. And there are no toxins or chemicals in the water."

"Sustainability & safety (e.g. facilities are secure so someone cannot tamper with them)."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

You are concerned with the security of our facilities and water supply and worry that water quality issues that you are experiencing now may not be resolved in the future.

## WATER SUPPLY

(26%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"That with global warming we may run out. Conservation of water will become more important."

"Will there always be an adequate supply?"

"Potential future droughts."

"Maintaining clean, abundant and accessible drinking water sources."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

You are concerned about the future of our water supply due to climate change and population growth.

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (16%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"There won't be any left to drink because it'll all get polluted."

"Bacteria and medications contaminating them or permanent ruining of the freshwater system in Ontario /Canada."

"I am concerned that we are not optimizing the use of our water, such as filtering wastewater to be used as grey water for our lawns instead of the current, fully treated water most people use for their lawns."

"We all waste so much water that it must be unsustainable. Pharmaceuticals flushed down toilets are a big concern."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

You would like see more water reuse options to reduce the amount of wasted water. You are concerned that water will become polluted and have negative effects on our water supply and the environment.

## COST (15%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"It'll be too expensive to the point where clean water is not affordable."

"The cost of the water is my main concern for the future. The increases that occurred within the last 10 years has been more than inflation."

"Over population in the area will reduce quality as more demand so quality will go down. Also rates going up so you can build all the updates for the new people and the older customers rates go up for you to pay for the new residents."

"The delivery fees are so high I've considered moving out of York Region."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about future water bill increases to the point where it is no longer affordable.**

## OUR WATER FUTURE (5%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Water pressure will become worse with housing growth."

"Due to the amount of new home builds in the area will the water pressure continue to decrease and will there be more water restrictions due to water shortage."

"Water being sold to the U.S. which can create a shortage for Residence of Canada."

"I worry about that sometimes, I always have heard the next war will be over water and Canada has a lot of it. People polluting the waters is my big complaint."

"Development on Oak Ridges Moraine, supply contamination, privatization of a public resource (eg. Bottled water companies draining aquifers for their profit)."

"I am concerned about companies like Nestle tapping into aquifers and using what should be a shared resource for profit."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about the future of your water supply because of local issues like population growth, as well as global ones like freshwater availability.**

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT (4%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"I'm concerned that all levels of government respect the importance of clean water. That they will responsibly balance cost savings with the continued upkeep and modernization of the systems that are in place to make sure it stays that way."

"At risk to have water source protections removed at the whim of elected government, popular opinion, or big corporations. Need protections that can't be revoked."

"Three important things stand out for me 1. Ensuring pollution is kept away from the water supply. 2. Ensuring good municipal and regional stewardship through strong policy statements. 3. Teaching water conservancy to all consumers."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned about the long-term protection of our water sources and ensuring our systems are properly maintained now and into the future.**

## EFFECTS ON HEALTH (1%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Increased chlorination. As water gets more polluted and contaminated, will more chemicals be required? And how will that affect peoples' health?"

"I am concerned about whether there will be any long term health concerns for myself or my children in consuming our hard water."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You are concerned with how water is treated to remove contaminants and if there are long-term health effects from drinking treated water.**

# POOLS AND PUDDLES, RAINBOWS AND RIVERBANKS, WATERFALLS AND WISHING WELLS. ALL PARTS OF OUR WATER WORLD YOU WOULD NOT WANT TO DO WITHOUT.

Concerns about the future of your water are completely understandable. We all want a healthy and safe future. The global population is growing and the amount of water on Earth remains the same. As more people use this resource, the stress on the entire system increases.

York Region is located within the Great Lakes Basin. This area makes up about 20 per cent of all the freshwater resources on Earth. York Region uses water from Lake Simcoe, Lake Ontario and underground aquifers. All of these sources of water are monitored and studied to ensure we are working in balance with the natural water system to maintain a reliable supply and protect the various ecosystems.

Planned growth and development through cooperation between health officials, planning teams, hydrogeologists, engineers, environmental experts, various levels of government and members of our communities will continue to guide our water service delivery.

Our long-term planning recognizes the balance between natural and human systems and the need to manage demand, establish treatment strategies and maintain service delivery standards. As more people recognize the complexity and scale of maintaining a safe and reliable supply of drinking water and wastewater treatment, our investments into planning and protecting for future uses and generations will gain increased appreciation and encourage behavior changes.

The Region is working to sustainably meet the water needs now and into the future by taking a One Water approach to how we manage water. This approach encourages greater conservation and the use of natural processes to manage water. It also finds valuable new sources of water in rainfall, snow melt and the safe reuse of treated wastewater for appropriate end uses. It is a framework that reduces the burden on water sources and extends the life of infrastructure.

Moving forward, we will continue to provide access to our studies and monitoring results, education about how our water system works and engaging with our communities to listen to concerns, understand needs and discuss options. Keeping safe clean water flowing from your taps will remain the number one goal today, tomorrow and into the future.



## dive deeper



Putting research, policy and coordination into practice, **FOLLOW COLLEEN BARFOOT** as she works to protect our water sources



**JOIN GARY PETERS** as this parent and professional highlights a small part of his role in the health of our water system



Check out **WHAT YOU PAY FOR** to learn about the pipes, plants, power and people behind your water services and water bill

Keeping our water safe through investigation, education and cooperation, learn about our Source Water Protection

[LEARN MORE](#)

For updated details about the various drinking water systems around York Region please visit our interactive Tableau app

[VIEW NOW](#)

From 2019 to 2021 we are updating our Water Wastewater Master Plan, to understand, engage and voice your opinion

[VIEW PLAN](#)

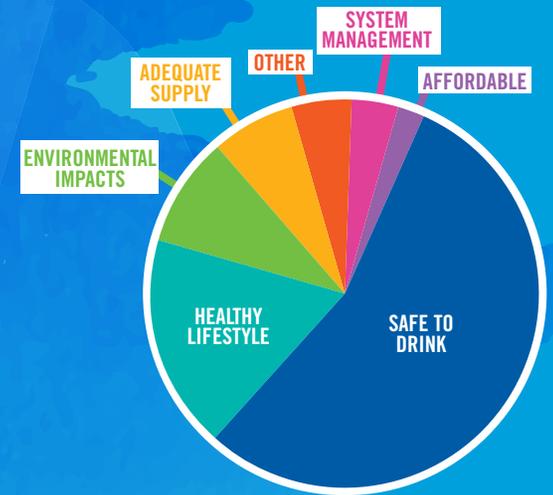
From then until now, York Region is listening to residents and working hard to provide safe, reliable water and to protect our environment

[WATCH NOW](#)

## Question 6:

# WHAT DOES SAFE WATER MEAN TO YOU?

Different to many, similar to most, important to all. What you think, hope and want all matter. Teamwork, partnerships, self-awareness and communication all contribute to a reliable system providing safe water.



### SAFE TO DRINK

(55%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Clean, free of harmful bacteria, drinkable."

"Safe water is water that is good enough to drink on a regular basis."

"My family is able to drink it without any further treatment once it comes out of the tap without getting sick."

"Clean, good tasting, drinkable right from the tap."

"It means that our water is safe from large corporations and clean."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel safe water means it is safe to drink.**

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

(18%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Everything. It means health. We need fresh clean water to survive. Buying bottled water is so bad for the environment"

"Safe water is water that can support abundant healthy life and is swimmable without thinking twice. I am more concentrated about the safety of the water that is returned to nature than the water that comes through my tap. Tap water has historically been safe in my community."

"It ensures good health and good quality of life."

"A lot. Thank you for not having to worry."

"Peace of mind. Won't make one ill if used without further treatment."

"We need water to live so safe water means everything."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel safe water is vital to a healthy lifestyle and life itself.**

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

(9%)

#### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Free of harmful toxins such as fluoride, pesticides, medication, drugs, heavy metals."

"Balancing the needs of humans with the needs and rights of all other living things."

"It needs to be available to all families, at a price that is reasonable for all, having safe water to drink and cook with while respecting the environment."

"It means a safe environment for both animals and humans and overall health of the environment which may result in the need of innovation to determine where and how we are protecting our water supply."

#### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel safe water means it is healthy for the environment and all living things.**

## ADEQUATE SUPPLY

(7%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Water that is drinkable and consistent, safety tested and easily accessible."

"Clean, Convenient, great taste, accessible."

"Reliable and potable source of water and being able to access it through my taps."

"Clean, drinkable, easy to access at any time for all members of the community, regardless of status or external factors."

"Water stays owned by the public, is tested frequently by public authorities, is safe for consumption, can be accessed by all Canadians, is affordable for all (e.g., subsidies for those without the ability to pay)."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel safe water means having a reliable supply of clean water available to everyone.**

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

(4%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Consistent testing by vetted sources. Secure facilities. Government oversight. Refusal to welcome privatization."

"Regular testing and upgrading old infrastructure."

"Water that is drinkable and consistent, safety tested and easily accessible."

"That the water is of drinking quality and is regularly monitored and checked to ensure it is safe for drinking. Any trace metals and contaminants are well below allowable limits."

### WHAT WE HEARD:

**You feel safe water means the whole water system is managed appropriately, from updating old infrastructure, to ensuring our facilities are secure to regular monitoring and testing.**

## AFFORDABLE

(2%)

### WHAT YOU SAID:

"Safe water is clean and affordable."

"It needs to be available to all families, at a price that is reasonable for all, having safe water to drink and cook with while respecting the environment."

### WHAT YOU HEARD:

**You feel safe water is affordable for everyone.**

## WHAT YOU SAID AND WHAT WE HEARD IN 2019... LET'S KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.

We are listening, hearing, seeing and acting. At York Region, our water system matters to you just as much as it does to us. We share it, we support it, we take care of it and we rely on it.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback. Your responses will help inform the Region's water and wastewater programs, initiatives and communications.

Our water and wastewater systems continue to provide safe reliable drinking water and treat wastewater 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

While the water is continually flowing, our education and engagement team continues to share messages of service delivery and programming about our people, system and service. For information on these programs, contact Access York at 1-888-967-5426.

To receive program updates and learn about other initiatives, sign up for our [Splash e-newsletter](#).



