



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of Committee of the Whole

FROM: Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: March 6, 2014

RE: **Update on Risk Categorization of Small Drinking Water Systems in York Region**

Small drinking water systems are non-residential systems and seasonal residential systems serving facilities such as churches, motels/hotels, community halls, arenas, trailer parks, and campgrounds. There are 312 small drinking water systems in York Region. Following a transfer from the Ministry of the Environment to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in 2008, public health units in Ontario are responsible for inspecting small drinking water systems. The program is cost-shared with the Province.

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

Health units conduct risk assessments of small drinking water systems using a risk categorization tool developed by the Province. The tool is an algorithmic matrix which assesses the various factors that may have an effect on water safety, including:

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

Based on risk assessment results, small drinking water systems are categorized as high, moderate or low risk. This risk categorization determines the provincially-mandated frequency of inspection (once every two years for high risk systems, and once every four years for low and

moderate risk systems). In some but not all cases, it is possible for a system to change risk level by addressing specific factors listed above.

The number of small drinking water systems in the Region classified as high risk continues to decline

When York Region Public Health conducted initial risk assessments of small drinking water systems in 2008, 53 systems were identified as high risk. York Region Public Health increased the frequency of inspection beyond Provincial requirements from once every two years to once every year for these premises. Public Health Inspectors educated operators on factors that contribute to categorization as high risk, and on options available to them. As a result of these efforts, only six small drinking water systems remained as high risk in February 2014 (see *Attachment 1*). If a system is classified as high risk, however, it does not necessarily mean that the operator is non-compliant with Public Health requirements. Most of the high risk premises dropped their risk categorizations by building up a regular sampling history, receiving operator training, and/or installing proper treatment devices.

The Public Health Branch will continue inspections and routine risk assessments of all small drinking water systems. Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, Public Health has the authority to close down a system that poses an immediate health hazard.

Dr. Karim Kurji, Medical Officer of Health

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**High risk small drinking water systems in York Region
(February 2014)**

Municipality	No. of high risk small drinking water systems
Georgina	1
King	1
Markham	1
Vaughan	1
Whitchurch-Stouffville	2
Total	6

The high risk small drinking water systems above include two places of worship, two treatment/therapeutic facilities, one recreational facility, and one private club.