

# 2021

## Annual Summary Report

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### Water Distribution System



**CITY OF ST. CATHARINES**

**WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**  
**2021 ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT**

*March 2022*

Waterworks #260003279

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## DEFINITIONS

**Backflow** – the undesirable reversal of flow possibly containing contaminations in to the potable water supply.

**Background Count** – the bacterial content in water which can be used to measure water quality deterioration in distribution systems.

**Cross Connection** – an actual or potential connection between a potable water system and any source of contamination.

**Disinfection** – effective destruction by chemical or physical processes of pathogenic microorganisms capable of causing disease.

**Escherichia coli (E. coli)** – a sub-group of Coliform bacteria. It is most frequently associated with recent fecal pollution. The presence of E. coli in drinking water may be an indication of sewage contamination.

**Free Chlorine Residual** - the amount of chlorine available for disinfection.

**Heterotrophic Plate Count (HPC)** – a microbiological test indicating the overall water quality in drinking water systems. Increases in HPC can indicate a problem with drinking water treatment.

**Lead** – present as a result of corrosion of lead solder, lead containing brass fittings or lead water service pipes.

**MAC – Maximum Acceptable Concentration** - this is a health-related standard established for parameters which, when present above a certain concentration, have known or suspected adverse health effects. The length of time the MAC can be exceeded without injury to health will depend on the nature and concentration of the parameter.

**Microbiological parameters** (i.e. bacteria) – bacteria which may come from wastewater treatment plants, livestock operations, septic systems and wildlife. Microbiological analysis is the most important aspect of drinking water quality due to its association with dangerous water-borne diseases.

**Total Coliforms** – the group of bacteria most commonly used as an indicator of water quality. Total coliforms are a group of closely related bacteria that are usually free-living in the environment, but are also normally present in water contaminated with human or animal feces. With certain exceptions, they do not cause disease. Coliforms are used as a screen for fecal contamination. The presence of these bacteria in a water sample indicates inadequate filtration and/or disinfection.

**Disinfection By-Products - Trihalomethanes (THMs), Haloacetic Acids (HAAs)** – disinfection by-products are produced when chlorine reacts with naturally occurring organic material found in water.

## INTRODUCTION

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), requires Municipal Council members be provided with a summary report for the drinking water system that falls under their municipal responsibility. The report must list any time the City was unable to meet the requirements of the Act, the regulations, the system's approval, drinking water works permit, municipal drinking water license or any order issued by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP). Each failure must specify the duration and measures taken to correct the failure. The report must also summarize the amount of water supplied by the system.

## Waterworks Description

The St. Catharines water distribution system is classified by the MECP as a Class II, large residential system. The City's waterworks consists of:

- 💧 605 kilometres of watermains;
- 💧 Approximately 3,500 hydrants;
- 💧 Over 5,600 valves.

The Region of Niagara's Decew Water Treatment Plant treats and supplies the water to the distribution system.

- 💧 The source of water is surface water, from Lake Erie
- 💧 The water is diverted via an intake from the Welland Canal located approximately six kilometers from the treatment plant, near Allanburg.
- 💧 The water travels along a 5.4 kilometre supply channel which flows by gravity directly to the treatment plant.
- 💧 The Decew Water Treatment Plant is a conventional surface water treatment plant which incorporates:
  - 💧 Zebra mussel control,
  - 💧 Screening,
  - 💧 Chemically assisted flocculation,
  - 💧 Coagulation,
  - 💧 Sedimentation,
  - 💧 Filtration,
  - 💧 Disinfection using sodium hypochlorite and ultraviolet light.

## Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program

Each municipal residential system must be licensed under the Municipal Drinking Water Licensing Program. This program requires municipalities to obtain a license to operate their water distribution system and to incorporate the concept of quality management into their operations. The license grants St. Catharines the ability to operate the water distribution system and identifies the conditions which must be met. The license must be renewed every five years. The City's Municipal Drinking Water License was last renewed in October 2019.

There are four components to the license that are applicable to St. Catharines:

- 1) *Drinking Water Works Permit* - the Permit allows for the establishment and alteration of the water distribution system. It replaces the previous Certificate of Approval process and results in a single permit for the entire system.
- 2) *The Drinking Water Quality Management System (DWQMS)* – The DWQMS is a Quality Management System for the City’s Water Distribution System. The DWQMS implements a systematic “continuous improvement” approach to planning, operations, corrective actions and management review to allow an organization to demonstrate sound system performance. The success of a DWQMS depends on the commitment from all levels and functions of an organization including operational staff and top management. The DWQMS is documented through the Operational Plan. The Operational Plan is regularly reviewed and continually improves.

In addition, internal audits take place and a yearly risk assessment is conducted and/or reviewed. The risk assessment was designed to meet the DWQMS standard and includes climate change hazards. Integrating climate hazards into existing workplans can help address these risks as well as provide context compared to other known risks (e.g. aging infrastructure). The higher risks to the drinking water system include staff shortages (e.g. pandemic, strike, lockout, lack of available staff etc.), supply issues from the Region of Niagara Decew Water Treatment Plant (loss of supply or contamination of the water supply), contamination of the distribution system (backflow, watermain breaks) and lead water services.

- 3) *System Accreditation* – each year, the City participates in an Audit of its DWQMS. Every three years an onsite, external Verification Audit must be conducted. The 2021 external audit was conducted remotely in July by NSF – International Strategic Registrations.
- 4) *Financial Plan* – the preparation of a Financial Plan is a requirement specified in Regulation 453/07 and intended to demonstrate that the municipality had considered all of the financial impacts of the drinking water system. A new Financial Plan must be submitted to Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) prior to each License renewal. Council’s Resolution confirming approval of the Financial Plan must be included in the License renewal documents.

### **The Drinking Water Quality Management System Policy**

The City of St. Catharines is committed to:

- Ensuring a consistent supply of safe, high quality drinking water;
- Maintaining and continuously improving its Quality Management System; and
- Meeting or surpassing applicable legislation and regulations.

## Actions Taken to Comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act

The Ontario *Safe Drinking Water Act* provides for the protection of human health and the prevention of drinking water health hazards through the control and regulation of drinking water systems and drinking water testing services. Ontario has a multi-barrier drinking water safety net, a framework designed to protect drinking water from the source to the tap. To comply with the Act and its regulations, the City undertakes the following actions:

- 💧 The City is required to take a minimum number of samples each month from a representative cross-section of its watermain network and to test these samples for microbiological indications of contamination. Testing for the free chlorine residual content is also a requirement. The chlorine residual must be measured at the same time and location as the microbiological sample.
- 💧 The City's drinking water is sampled every three months at points within the distribution system where there is a likelihood for the potential of elevated formations of Disinfection Byproducts, including Trihalomethanes (THMs) and Haloacetic Acids (HAAs).
- 💧 Anyone who conducts sampling from within the water distribution system must be certified as a Water Quality Analyst or Water Distribution Operator by the Ontario Water Wastewater Certification Office (OWWCO). These certifications must be renewed every three years and have mandatory, MECP-approved training requirements.
- 💧 All laboratory analysis must be carried out by an accredited laboratory. The City of St. Catharines currently uses a number of accredited laboratories. Accreditation ensures acceptable laboratory protocols and test methods are in place. It also requires the laboratory to provide evidence and assurances of the proficiency of the analysts performing the test methods. Laboratories are audited by the Canadian Association for Laboratories Accreditation (CALA) and accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC).
- 💧 All drinking water sample results are available to the public. Annual reports are available at City Hall and on the City's website, [www.stcatharines.ca](http://www.stcatharines.ca). The daily sample records are available on request for the public to view.
- 💧 Notification is given to the MECP, the Regional Public Health Department, Niagara Region staff and the Decew Water Treatment Plant of all incidents of regular sampling which exceed the Maximum Allowable Concentration (MAC).
- 💧 On an annual basis, the MECP conducts a rigorous and comprehensive inspection of the municipal drinking water system to determine compliance under the SDWA and associated regulations.

## WATER QUALITY TEST RESULTS

### Summary of Results

In 2021, over 7,200 samples were taken throughout the City and analyzed for microbiological parameters, chlorine residual and chemicals analyses as part of the drinking water surveillance program. **Table 1** summarizes each parameter tested and it gives the number of samples required, the number of samples analyzed, and the range of results.

Table 1: Summary of Water Quality Test Results, 2021					
Parameter	MAC	Minimum Number of Samples Required	Number of Samples Taken	Results Range	Comments
Microbiological Analysis (Units = CFU/100 mL)					
<i>Escherichia coli</i> (E. coli)	ND	1116	1376	0	Fecal coliform bacteria that indicates the presence of sewage or animal waste contamination.
Total Coliforms	ND	1116	1376	0 – 1 (+NDOGT)	Not generally harmful; but the presence can indicate the possibility of fecal contamination.
Background Count	NA	1116	1376	0-19	General bacterial population used to indicate deterioration of water quality.
Heterotrophic Plate Count (HPC)	NA	279	744	0 ->300	HPC levels are used to monitor the general overall water quality. (*units = CFU/1mL)

ND – None Detected

NA – Not Applicable

CFU – Colony Forming Units

mL – Millilitres

NDOGT – No Data Overgrowth with Target – the test result is “overgrown”, meaning there is a heavy load of bacteria in the sample which can make it difficult to identify or count the bacterial indicators that may be present.



Table 1: Summary of Water Quality Test Results, 2021 (continued)

Parameter	MAC (mg/L)	Minimum Number of Samples Required	Number of Samples Taken	Results Range	Comments	
<b>Chemical Analysis</b>						
Trihalomethanes mg/L	0.10	4	12	0.020-0.046	Disinfection By-product; reaction of chlorine with organic matter. The results are based on a four quarter annual running average.	
Haloacetic Acids mg/L	0.08	4	12	0.0053-0.0143	Disinfection By-product; reaction of chlorine with organic matter. The results are based on a four quarter annual running average.	
Lead mg/L	Plumbing	0.010	--	5	<0.001	Lead water service connections may be found in homes built prior to 1955. No lead piping was used in the distribution system.
	Distribution		10	10	<0.001	
Alkalinity	0.010 NA	10	10	90-95	The capacity for neutralizing an acid solution	
pH	NA	10	15	7.0-7.9	Indicates the acidity of the water	
<b>Disinfectant</b>						
Chlorine Residual	Must be between 0.05 mg/L & 4.0 mg/L	1116	2302	0.06-1.76	The free chlorine residual in the water distribution system is an indicator of the effectiveness of the disinfection process.	

mg/L – Miligrams per Litre

## Percentages of Test Results Meeting Ontario Drinking Water Quality Standards

**Table 2** shows the percentage of each type of drinking water sample that met the MECP Drinking Water Quality Standards in the St. Catharines distribution system. Also included is the total number of samples meeting the Standard in St. Catharines and the total number of samples in the Province meeting the Standard.

Table 2: Percentage of test results meeting MECP Standards, 2021			
E. coli	100%	Lead - Distribution	100%
Total Coliform	99.9%	Trihalomethanes	100%
Chlorine Residual	100%	Haloacetic Acids	100%
Total Samples in the St. Catharines Distribution System Meeting the Standard			99.96%
Total Samples in the Province of Ontario Meeting the Standard			99.85%

## Summary of Adverse Water Quality Incidents

An adverse water quality incident does not mean the drinking water supply is unsafe. An adverse incident simply indicates on that one occasion, a drinking water quality standard was exceeded. In 2021, two Adverse Water Quality Incidents took place, one with elevated levels of Total Coliforms and the second having No Data Overgrown Target Colonies (NDOGT). NDOGT refers to when the test result is “overgrown”, meaning there is a heavy load of bacteria in the sample which can make it difficult to identify or count the bacterial indicators that may be present.

After each adverse water quality incident, a series of actions are required to ensure the safety of the water and compliance with provincial legislation. The City’s Standard Operating Procedures provide clear and detailed instruction for follow up actions. This involves flushing hydrants located in the area of the adverse incident, taking additional water samples from the original location and locations around the adverse incident. It also involves notifying the MECP’s Niagara office, the Spills Action Centre (SAC) and the Public Health Department both verbally and in writing. **Appendix A** summarizes all adverse water quality incidents throughout the City of St. Catharines in 2021 and the corrective action taken to resolve each incident.

## Lead Exceedances

As part of the Community Wide Lead Testing Program, the City is required to take samples from within private residences. The results are site-specific, and not indicative of the quality of the water throughout the distribution system. When sampling for lead, the results represent the water sampled from within that residence. Potential lead sources include: older lead water service lines, usually built prior to the 1950’s; internal plumbing, used mainly in the early 1900’s; and older brass or bronze fittings and fixtures. When a lead exceedance occurs, both the Public Health Department and the MECP are notified. The affected resident is also

immediately notified and a package containing the results and informational fact sheets detailing what options are available to the resident are delivered. In 2021, the City received covid-related relief from entering homes to sample for lead. There were no lead exceedances found on private property.

### Replacing Lead Water Services

When a lead water service is found, for example, during a new watermain construction project or when repairing a water service leak the City will replace the portion of the service on public property at the City’s expense. The City will also replace the public property side of a lead service when a lead exceedance is found through testing and also whenever the property owner first replaces the private portion of the lead service line. Lead lines are replaced with either copper or plastic service lines. In 2021, there were five replacements totaling almost 40 metres of lead service pipe being removed.

## OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Water System Disruptions

Disruptions to the water distribution system typically are due to unplanned maintenance required in the system. In addition to watermain break repairs, this can include any repairs to service lines, valves and hydrants. The majority of these repairs require the water to be shut-off resulting in a disruption of water service to customers. **Table 3** summarizes water disruptions in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

The Province’s Watermain Disinfection Procedure outlines the requirements for responding and repairing watermain breaks. It includes a sampling procedure for post watermain break repairs; and requirements for classifying each break and documentation of each break.

Table 3: Number of Service Disruptions		
Number of:	2020	2021
Mainbreaks	115	100
Services	60	39
Hydrant	4	4
Valve	16	8
Construction*	1	0
Other	0	3
Total Repairs	196	154
Affected properties**	3,766	2847
Water off-hours***	674	651.75

\* Construction refers to unplanned service disruptions in a Construction zone.

\*\* Affected properties refers to the number of properties who were without water due to an unscheduled disruption (i.e. they had their water shut off during the repair).

\*\*\* Water off-hours is the total number of hours properties were without water due to an unscheduled disruption.

## New Watermain Commissioning

When a new watermain is installed, the City is required to sample for microbiological parameters and chlorine residual. In 2021, over 200 samples were taken to test the new watermains before being put into service. If any bacteria are present, the new watermains are flushed, re-chlorinated and sampled again until no bacterial contamination is found before being put into service. All of the watermains must also meet the required standard for chlorine residual.

## Maintenance Costs

In 2021, approximately \$7,980,000 was spent on watermain capital projects. This allowed for the installation of approximately 7.93 km of watermain. The cost of watermain repairs was approximately \$354,000.

## Water Flows

**Table 4** lists the monthly water flows from the Decew Water Treatment Plant to the City of St. Catharines (source: Regional Municipality of Niagara). More detailed flow data can be found the Decew Water Treatment Plant’s 2021 Summary Report, available at: [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca).

Table 4: Monthly Water Flows for 2020 and 2021		
Month	Quantity (MegaLitres)	
	2020	2021
January	1101.3	1008.9
February	998.2	928.2
March	1104.6	1027.4
April	1032.2	1018.9
May	1212.0	1268.8
June	1401.9	1295.5
July	1621.1	1286.1
August	1558.0	1453.1
September	1549.5	1166.8
October	976.5	1097.4
November	995.0	1008.1
December	997.5	1040.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,547.8</b>	<b>13,600.1</b>
Monthly Average	1212.3	1133.3
Daily Average	39.9	37.3

Note: 1 MegaLitre (ML) = 1,000,000 Litres

## Investing in the Future

Residents trust the City of St. Catharines for safe, clean, and reliable drinking water every time they turn on their tap. St. Catharines is proud to deliver on those expectations. We also know that investments are required to renew our drinking water systems and allow us to meet those expectations tomorrow and for future generations by improving water quality, reliability and increasing resiliency to extreme weather events, while lowering maintenance costs over time. The City continues to work on these essential improvements.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information on the City of St. Catharines drinking water system or the content of this report, please contact the Manager of Environmental Services, Mark Green at: [mgreen@stcatharines.ca](mailto:mgreen@stcatharines.ca)

## APPENDIX A

**Summary of Adverse Water Quality Incidents, 2021**

Incident Date	Location	Adverse Parameter	Result	Corrective Action	Corrective Action Date
Nov. 1, 2021	192 Linwell Road	Total Coliform	1 CFU /100mL	Flushed nearby hydrants. Resampled the surrounding area, including the original location. All of the resamples met the drinking water standard.	Nov. 2 and 4, 2021
Dec. 14, 2021	312 Queenston Street	No Data Overgrowth with Target Colonies Present	--	Flushed nearby hydrants. Resampled the surrounding area, including the original location. All of the resamples met the drinking water standard.	Dec. 15 and 16, 2021