



# DRINKING WATER in Closed Buildings



## The Issue

Vacations, weekends and closures leave many buildings empty or at reduced capacity.

- This includes:**
- Offices
  - Hotels
  - Schools
  - Retail stores
  - Gyms
  - Daycare centers
  - Restaurants
  - Factories
  - Places of worship etc.

When buildings are using little to no water for a prolonged period, there is a potential for water quality issues to occur in the internal plumbing.

Water left sitting in your internal piping can become stagnant. Sitting or stagnant water will have little to no chlorine to help kill any potential harmful bacteria that can be found in a faucet or internal plumbing. Stagnant water can also “pick up” unwanted chemicals, and metals from the internal pipes.



## Responsibility

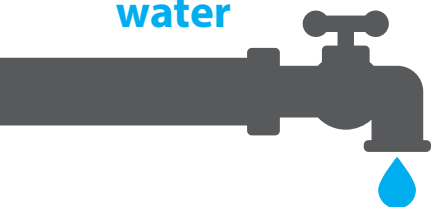
The City of St. Catharines along with the Niagara Region are here to provide safe drinking water to each property, but it is the **responsibility of each property owner or building operator** to ensure the water stays safe within their building. The below consideration **MUST** be addressed before allowing use of a building that has been closed for a prolonged period.

## Solution

The best way to remove unsafe water is to flush all the sitting water out of the internal pipes. When flushing, you want to run the cold water tap from multiple locations within the building until you get the cool, fresh water from the watermain. The watermains are the large pipes, typically found under the street outside your home which has fresh water continually moving through the system, directly from the Water Treatment Plant. This water is routinely tested to ensure its safety.



## Best Practices and recommendations for safe internal water



**First flush the cold water, then hot water**



**Flush a minimum of once a week**



**Flush for at least 5 minutes**



**Flush from all spouts, taps and tanks**

Please note that flushing recommendations vary as every building is different in the number of occupants, the length and complexity of the internal system and the maintenance performed during the shut down. For buildings with complex plumbing systems further guidance can be found at the websites below:

**Canadian Water and Wastewater Association**  
[cwwa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Re-Opening-Buildings-FACT-SHEET\\_FINAL-amend1.pdf](http://cwwa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Re-Opening-Buildings-FACT-SHEET_FINAL-amend1.pdf)

**Niagara Region**  
[niagararegion.ca/living/water/flushing-your-facility.aspx](http://niagararegion.ca/living/water/flushing-your-facility.aspx)

