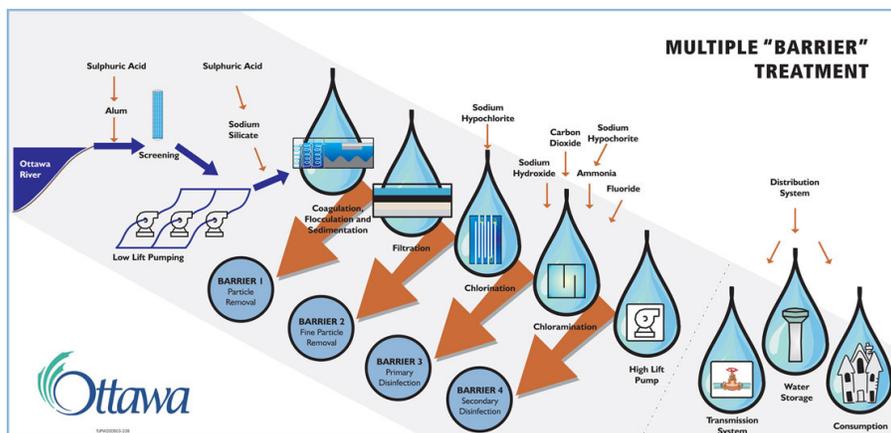


WARNING – City's tap water is not really safe to drink

The City of Ottawa has recently celebrated a milestone victory in accomplishing a 100% provincial safety report on its drinking water for 2 consecutive years for which they are to be congratulated. However, when the truth is known it is somewhat a hollow victory. The purpose of this letter is not to point fingers at any one person or organization but to warn every family in Ottawa of a major health dilemma facing the City of Ottawa along with cities across the continent and around the world and which, strangely enough, only individual families can fix.

In Canada we have the Safe Water Act which directs municipalities to disinfect their drinking water in order to prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, e-coli, dysentery, legionnaires disease, typhoid fever, gastroenteritis, poliomyelitis, and many more known viral, bacterial, parasitic and protozoal infections present in raw water.

In order to prevent such diseases in Ottawa, the city adds large quantities of Sulphuric acid, Sodium Silicate, Sodium Hydroxide (better known as Caustic soda), Chlorine, Ammonia and Chloramine (a mixture of Chlorine and Ammonia) all toxic but necessary in order to prevent the spread of these often deadly diseases (see City of Ottawa website).



This is the chart that shows the water purification process from the City of Ottawa website found at http://ottawa.ca/residents/water/distribution/images/flowchrt_en.jpg

This is an admirable effort for which they should be congratulated. However, all of those toxic chemicals remain in the drinking water right up to your tap, along with the 40 chemicals that the city monitors and assures us are at supposedly “acceptable” levels, and with the 2000+ other chemicals that have been found in drinking water that they do not have the resources to identify or remove.

City claims of producing safe water (according to federal and provincial guidelines) are true, provided your definition of safe applies only to the risk of waterborne disease. However, the research community, including federal and provincial agencies in Canada, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the States, along with universities and other research establishments around the world have, for decades, clearly identified that drinking chlorinated water over an extended period leads to cancer, heart disease, birth defects and a long list of other life threatening diseases.

The greatest danger we all face is this cocktail of chemicals that go on to form other often toxic compounds. One obvious example is the known carcinogenic Trihalomethanes that are created as a bi-product when chlorine is added to the water and then reacts with the organic material in the water. It should be noted that the Ottawa River has a very high level of organic content because it meanders through many miles of forest.



SO WHY DOESN'T THE CITY DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

Because they can't. Unfortunately the city has a dilemma that is virtually impossible to resolve. The city has to produce 281 million litres of water every day so that we can turn on our taps and wash dishes, do laundry, flush toilets, water our lawns and even drink some of it. The water we actually consume is far less than five percent of the water that is disinfected. To actually “purify” that much water every day would send our property taxes through the roof and even if they could remove all the chemicals at the plant it would become re-contaminated as it passes through the 2800 kilometers of crud laden water pipe to get to our taps. I was told at the Ottawa filtration plant that it takes three weeks for the water to reach my home. The city is having difficulty building an infrastructure to separate rainwater from raw sewage. Just think what a system to separate drinking water would cost.

These are the new water pipes on the left that are being used to gradually replace the older crud laden water pipes on the right

The dilemma the city faces is virtually impossible to resolve and even if it were possible it would more than double our property taxes. However, there is a simple and relatively inexpensive solution to this major problem. I personally praise the city for all of the work they do to keep us safe from deadly diseases and I want that chlorine in the water right up to my taps.

At that point I can decide whether I install a good water purification system to protect my family's health or just sit back and let them become the filter. If you decide your family should become the filter then remember replacing the clogged human organs can be a long, painful and sometimes fatal process and you always get a used one. As for me I would rather be able to discard the filter cartridge with all the bacteria, toxic chemicals, heavy metals and other toxic contaminants and start fresh with a new cartridge each year or two.

I say a "good" water purification system simply because there are so many water purifiers that imply that they purify the water, but don't. At least the Brita Company is honest enough to state in the small print, hidden on the inside of the refill packaging that "The Brita Pitcher Filter is not intended to purify water". There are so many GACS (granular activated carbon) filters that are cheap but only do half the job. There are sophisticated reverse osmosis systems that remove everything including the essential minerals. Fortunately after a lot of research I found that there are some really good water purifiers on the market that really do remove 99.99% of the contaminants and still retain the essential minerals.

I personally prefer the four stage full spectrum purifier with a washable ceramic cartridge that filters down to 0.3 of a micron because you get to see all the crud in the water that is trapped on the outside of the ceramic cartridge as shown in the picture here. A good purifier is not that expensive when considering the long term health of your family.



If you draw your drinking water from a well, you should remember that many of the chemicals mentioned above have infiltrated the ground water aquifers and of course are not identified when you have your water tested, as the lab is only testing for E.coli and total Coliform, but do not look for any other toxic chemicals in the water. Even people on a well should seriously consider a good filtration system. If you have a salt softener and therefore need to buy a reverse osmosis system, to remove the excessive sodium, then watch for two important features. Number one is that it has a remineralizing cartridge to put the natural minerals back into the water. Number two is to watch for price. A local company recently featured on the CBC's Marketplace, for bad marketing practices, sells their reverse osmosis system for \$4300.00 when another local water filter company sells an identical remineralizing reverse osmosis system for \$995.00

This is a picture of my washable ceramic cartridge with the brown residue from the city water that it has removed before my family drinks it. A new cartridge is white. It's nice to see what you don't have to drink.

You thought taking a shower was safe. Doctors are now saying that taking a nice hot 10 minute shower exposes the body, through inhalation and skin absorption, to as much chemical contamination as drinking four litres of city water. Some doctors have suggested that people without shower filters should seriously consider having very short showers with water as cool as they possibly can as the heat creates more contaminated vapour mist to inhale. There are even filters that just hang on the spout while they fill the bath, for people that like to have a long soak in the bathtub or for bathing little children.

Some interesting facts:

- Most people who don't drink city water, say it is because of the taste of chlorine and drink other flavoured drinks instead.
- Many youth, once given purified water switch away from sugar laden drinks and are quite happy to drink purified water.
- Many citizens who drink chlorinated water do not taste the chlorine because their taste buds, like smokers, have become insensitive to the taste and it often takes several months of drinking purified water before it returns.
- People who drink eight glasses of purified water a day decrease the risk of colon cancer by 45%, breast cancer by 79%, bladder cancer by 50%, rectal cancer by 38% as well as preventing or reducing incidence of back and joint pain, kidney stones, urinary tract infections, constipation and migraine headaches. Water is certainly not the only cause of cancer but it is a major contributor.
- The body can survive a week without food but cannot survive a day without water.
- Every family needs and deserves a good water purifier

Research and evidence to support the content of this letter are provided by Health Canada, The Public Health Agency of Canada, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and the Environmental Protection agency (EPA) in the US, The World Health Organization, Universities of Calgary, Minnesota, Alberta and Memorial University in Newfoundland, Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Medical College of Wisconsin, American Journal of Public Health, Water Quality Association, New Scientist and Science News magazines, National Academy of Sciences, US Council of Environmental Quality and hundreds of other national and international organizations concerned about the effect of drinking water on the health of individuals.