



**THE CORPORATION
OF
THE TOWN OF HALTON HILLS**

Resolution No.:

Title: Private Drinking Water Testing

Date: September 16, 2024

Moved by: Councillor J. Brass

Seconded by: Councillor J. Racinsky

Item No.

WHEREAS, in December 2023, the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario released the Value-for-Money Audit (the audit) of Public Health Ontario (PHO) to assess whether PHO has effective systems and procedures in place to deliver on its mandate;

AND WHEREAS the audit included recommendations to improve operational efficiencies in the PHO laboratory program by gradually closing six of its 11 laboratory sites, including the Hamilton Public Health Ontario Laboratory, as well as to gradually discontinue free private drinking water testing;

AND WHEREAS private wells are the predominant drinking water source in rural and remote areas across Ontario and in 2023 it was estimated that Halton Region has 5,633 private residential wells;

AND WHEREAS private residential wells lack the regulatory oversight of large municipal drinking water systems, leaving them vulnerable to contamination risks;

AND WHEREAS private drinking water testing for Halton Hills' rural residents is a critical public health resource for private well users to help ensure the safety of their drinking water;

AND WHEREAS water analysis by licensed laboratories is costly and the discontinuation of free private drinking water testing may result in reduced

testing, disproportionately impacting Halton Hills' rural residents, especially vulnerable populations who rely on accessible and reliable water testing services to ensure safe drinking water;

AND WHEREAS services at the Hamilton Public Health Ontario Laboratory include testing of private drinking water samples as well as testing for diseases of public health significance and the analysis of beach water samples, and it is the fourth largest regional laboratory in Ontario and supports six service locations including the Region of Halton;

AND WHEREAS closure of the Hamilton Public Health Ontario Laboratory may impact the rapid identification and control of outbreaks of infectious diseases in the Town of Halton Hills and delay and/or compromise sample analysis and reporting;

AND WHEREAS the Walkerton Inquiry Report, which was released after the tragic events in Walkerton, Ontario, underscored the importance of robust water quality monitoring and regulatory oversight and concluded that the privatization of laboratory testing for municipal drinking water samples was connected directly to the tragic outbreak.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Mayor write a letter to the Provincial Minister of Health requesting that the Provincial Government continue to provide free private drinking water testing services and reconsider the closure of the Hamilton Public Health Ontario Laboratory as it is an essential part of the public health infrastructure supporting the Town of Halton Hills;

AND THAT a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, The Honourable Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Michael Sherar, President & Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario, Halton Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), Halton Region, Towns of Oakville and Milton, City of Burlington, Brant County Health Unit, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, Niagara Region Public Health Department, Hamilton Public Health Services, Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO).

Mayor Ann Lawlor