

Communication Update

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

Date: July 13, 2026

Subject/Report No.: Woodward Water Treatment Plant - 2025/26 MECP
Inspection Report (HW2605)

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

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Signature:



The purpose of this Communication Update is to provide Council with an update on the recent Woodward Drinking Water System Annual Inspection report and its rating of 85.5%.

Summary

The 2025/26 Drinking Water System Annual Inspection Report for the Hamilton (Woodward) Drinking Water System identified five non-compliance findings and received an overall inspection report rating of 85.8%. The number of non-compliance findings is similar to previous inspection years; however, the rating is lower than in previous years.

The lower rating is primarily due to an August 2025 incident at the Woodward Water Treatment Plant (Water Plant) in which errors led to partial disinfection during pre-treatment. This constituted non-compliance with our Municipal Drinking Water License. Required disinfection was ultimately achieved at the Water Plant, and no improperly disinfected water was delivered to customers. Upon discovery, immediate corrective actions were taken to prevent a recurrence. A full investigation and root cause analysis have also been completed, and additional corrective actions, including revisions to several procedures and additional staff training, are underway.

Background

Every year, Water Compliance Officers from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (the Ministry) inspect each Municipal Drinking Water System in the Province. The inspections assess the Operating Authority's compliance with the requirements of the Safe

Drinking Water Act and associated Regulations; the System's Drinking Water Works Permit; and the Municipal Drinking Water License. They cover all facets of the system from source to tap, including treatment and distribution systems and processes.

The inspection reports include a risk-based rating based on the number and potential significance of non-compliance findings. For example, a finding of incomplete documentation would generally carry less risk than a failure to meet treatment requirements; therefore, a non-compliance finding for incomplete documentation would be assigned fewer points than one related to treatment requirements. Municipal drinking water systems in Ontario largely receive inspection ratings above 80%.

The City has six drinking water systems that receive annual inspections (Carlisle, Fifty Road, Freelon, Greensville, Lynden, and Hamilton). Generally, these systems perform well, with few non-compliance findings and inspection ratings in the mid-to-high 90s (%). The Hamilton (Woodward) system is significantly more complex than the smaller well-based systems and therefore tends to have more non-compliance findings. Over the previous five years, the Hamilton (Woodward) system has received two to five non-compliance findings, largely related to administrative deficiencies, challenges with third-party contractors, or one-off errors. Inspection ratings averaged 96%.

Details

As noted in the summary, the 2025/26 Drinking Water System Inspection Report for the Hamilton (Woodward) System includes five non-compliance findings and an inspection rating of 85.8%. While the number of non-compliance findings is similar to previous years, the inspection rating is lower than typically observed.

Documentation, logbooks, and actions by third-party contractors continue to pose challenges for Hamilton Water, although improvements are underway through retraining and revisions to operating procedures. The lower inspection rating for the 2025/26 period is due to an improper disinfection incident at the Woodward Water Plant.

During the annual inspection, the Ministry officer questioned an August 3, 2025, incident in which malfunctioning online instrumentation required operations staff to perform manual calculations to confirm that adequate disinfection had been achieved in the pretreatment process at the Water Plant. Backup documentation was provided to support the completed calculations. During the review, it became apparent that the manual calculator used by operators differed from the version maintained within the quality management system. The operators' version contained a programming error. Had the proper form been used at the time, operators would have been aware that full disinfection was not being achieved. As a result of the error, only partial treatment was achieved in the pretreatment process for 82 minutes.

At all times, sufficient additional disinfection was maintained in the clear well storage reservoir, ensuring that no improperly treated water was delivered to customers. Once the incident became known to management, Public Health was notified, and immediate remedial actions were implemented. Additionally, staff have since conducted a full investigation and root cause analysis and have implemented further corrective actions.

The August 3, 2025, incident resulted in two non-compliance findings in the annual inspection report, including:

- Failure to operate treatment equipment as designed to meet regulatory requirements
- Failure to complete immediate notification of the incident.

Next Steps

Hamilton Water remains committed to transparency and to upholding the highest standards of drinking water quality and regulatory compliance. The corrective actions underway - including procedure updates, staff training, and system improvements - are being implemented with due diligence and with a focus on maintaining the community's trust and confidence in the City's drinking water services.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

None