

Churches

Loving Regina

On Sunday, a number of churches from around the city kicked off Love Regina Week, a series of events meant to highlight local volunteerism and celebrate the city.

The week will include a food bank drive, a blood donor clinic, park and neighbourhood cleanups, and will culminate with a community carnival in the Heritage district. Volunteers will be wearing red shirts to show their support for the city. Visit facebook.com/lovere Regina2012 for more information.

METRO

City to reline asbestos pipes this year

The City of Regina plans to reline asbestos cement watermains this year.

Asbestos cement (AC) pipe makes up about 590 kilometres of the city's 1,690-km long watermains.

The city has set aside about \$2 million for the work, says Sandy Bailey, Water & Sewer engineering manager. In the 2012 budget, about \$65.8 million is allocated for water system improvements.

Inhaled asbestos is known to be a major carcinogen, but the jury is out on whether it's as deadly when waterborne. A 2010 National Research Council (NRC) study reports: "Although there are fewer health concerns about water-

From the report:

"Watermain breaks are a primary cause of water service disruptions, water losses and discoloured water."

Regina budget report

borne asbestos fibres, there are still concerns about the inhalation of airborne asbestos from showers, humidifiers, etc. There are also some concerns about the ingestion of fibres from drinking water, as well as the clogging of filter systems."

With deteriorating AC pipe, according to 2011 National Research Council (NRC) report, even minor disturbances such as a water hammer can release biofilms and asbestos fibres

into the drinking water, "causing a health concern." A 2005 NRC report indicates "a total of 911 breaks were recorded" in Regina between 1994-2003, and a 2007 report says the AC pipes have broken most often in Whitmore Park-Hillsdale area.

However, asbestos fibres are not monitored in Regina's drinking water quality data reports, Bailey says. Health Canada doesn't require monitoring of asbestos fibres because,

it reports, "currently available data indicate no health risk or aesthetic problem."

Asbestos cement pipes offer more risk when replaced, Bailey adds. The city has procedures to protect workers from airborne asbestos, including appropriate respirators, clothing, tools and methods. But the safest and cheapest method, she adds, is to insert liners.

"It's basically like an inside-out sock that has a resin impregnated into the fibre," Bailey says, and that is then put through the old pipe and then it's expanded and cured right in place, and it becomes a brand new pipe on the inside of the old one."

M.E. POWELL FOR METRO

How safe is our water?

Is bottled better? City says chlorine is needed to kill bacteria from water sources

M.E. POWELL
regina.metronews.ca

Bottled water sales are increasing in Regina, even as residents are paying more for their water and sewer services.

The 2011 Water & Sewer Utility budget included an annual rate increase of nine per cent for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The city monitors water quality constantly, says Ken Wiens, manager of water services for the city, and makes water quality reports available online. Also, "uni-directional flushing" with high-velocity water clears dirt and debris from water mains on a three-year rotation.

Regina's water supply travels from the water treatment plant at Buffalo Pound Lake down a 57-km pipeline.

"We purposely put chlorine in the water ... to disinfect the water, to inactivate the bacteria in the water — bacteria that exist naturally in the environment," says Wiens.

Chlorine is essentially "the devil we know." It can react

Quoted:

"I'm shocked — not only shocked, but a bit angered by people at U of R who will buy bottled water and walk by a tap that's right beside them."

Chris Yost, microbiologist

with organic materials, causing trihalomethanes (THMs) linked to cancers, gastrointestinal problems, and other illnesses, but it can also be controlled and monitored.

Other methods like ozone or ultraviolet light don't provide as much protection from bacteria, according to Health Canada, especially when water is piped. Some, like chloramines or chlorine dioxide, are not considered as effective and the by-products are not as well known.

Regina's "multi-barrier approach" includes sophisticated treatment processes and extensive testing, says Wiens. The 2012 budget includes \$65.8 million for water infrastructure upgrades.

"I don't have to guess or assume. Is the water safe today or not?" says Wiens. "It is always safe."

Even so, Mark Atnikov,



Leanne Melton, 22, drinks from a water fountain at the Science Centre. M.E. POWELL FOR METRO

general manager of Rainsoft Regina Ltd., says bottled water is his busiest product line. "We're seeing growth in that side of the market every year."

"People use bottled water because they're just not always satisfied with the aesthetic qualities of tap water," says Atnikov. "Chlorine will

kill bacteria, but it doesn't do us any good either."

Chlorine is a hurdle set up to help prevent disease, argues Chris Yost, the University of Regina's Canada Research Chair in Microbes, the Environment and Food Safety. "It's one of those things that the microbes would have to

get over, to get you sick. Yost says not every place in the world can claim to have safe drinking water.

"It staggers me that people don't appreciate how lucky that is, to be able to just turn on a tap and drink water and not worry about the fact that it's going to kill you."

Bad Taste

Water issues? Get it tested

When Sarah Etter moved into her apartment about two years ago, she didn't expect her tap water to be undrinkable.

On Twitter, she called the flavour of her water "something else: Due to old pipes in neighbourhood & apartment — metallic with a bitter be-

fore, during, and aftertaste."

Etter, candidate for city council in Ward 6, said she relies instead on bottled water and friends with access to reverse osmosis filters. She admitted she hasn't had her water tested, but she wonders about the cause. "Definitely part of it is my old apartment building and the quality of the pipes in the actual building, as well as the city," Etter said. "I don't think they maintain

the watermains as well as they should."

The city flushed water mains in Etter's area of College Avenue East in 2010, confirmed Ken Wiens, Water Operations manager. Regina watermains are flushed on a three-year rotation, so it will be flushed again in 2013.

"Could things have changed in the last two years? Yes," Wiens added. "Is it possible that the water

is not OK right now? It's extremely unlikely, but if it is, we would need to check the chlorine residuals, and check the turbidity of the water at this point in time. If there's a concern there, then we will deal with that."

"If people have a concern about a service that the city is providing they should contact the city and then we'll do an investigation," Wiens said.

M.E. POWELL FOR METRO



To drink or not to drink? TORONTO NEWS SERVICE