

City fights to stop home sewage from spilling into creeks

By Samantha Craggs, [CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 18, 2014 10:54 AM ET Last Updated: Mar 18, 2014 12:47 PM ET



Outfall pipes such as this one are causing high numbers of E. coli and total coliform, which is flowing into Red Hill Creek and possibly Lake Ontario. The city has poured more resources into identifying and correcting illegal home sewer connections. (Mark Chambers/CBC)

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The city will hire two more staff and spend nearly half a million dollars to fix incorrect sewer hookups dumping sewage into local waterways.

The city's public works committee voted Monday to pour money into speeding up, identifying and fixing illegal cross connections. Homes and businesses improperly connected to the city's sewer system are cited as a reason for high e.coli numbers in local creeks such as Chedoke and Red Hill.

E.coli is an issue in local waterways. Environment Hamilton did testing in 2012 and found sky-high rates of E.coli in the Red Hill Creek, as well as fecal matter, condoms and sanitary debris – obvious waste from home sewer connections.



Waste that appears to have been flushed down toilets is appearing the creek. (Mark Chambers/CBC)

In the area where the Red Hill Valley Parkway crosses over Barton Street East, for example, tests showed 28,000 E.coli per 100 ml of water. That's 280 times the provincial recreational limit of 100, and higher than the city's limit of 2,400.

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Public works committee members voted Monday to transfer \$450,000 from a water reserve, and to hire two more staff.

The spending is necessary, said Coun. Brian McHattie of Ward 1, who witnessed the problem himself in Chedoke Creek.

Not only is it potentially dangerous for anyone who comes in contact with the water, but the smell is incredible.

“By the golf course, you can smell the E.coli,” he said. “Raw sewage is what it smells like. It’s both a public health issue and an aesthetic issue.”

In December 2001, the Ministry of Environment ordered the city to analyze discharge from every outfall. When the city failed to do so in the set timeline, it was referred back to the MOE.

The city has been working over the years to identify and correct improper connections, Monday’s staff report says.

Chris McLaughlin, executive director of the Bay Area Restoration Council, was heartened by Monday’s decision. This is an important step toward improving local water quality and remediating Hamilton Harbour, he said.

“Only with continued investigation will we be able to locate and reduce E.coli from direct residential sewage discharges going into our creeks and impacting water quality downstream,” he said Monday.

“The city has moved significantly in that direction this morning.”