

June 20, 2001

To: The Residents of the hamlet of Bragg Creek

RE: WATER ADVISORY

This advisory is directed to residents within the hamlet of Bragg Creek who use a private water well or a surface supply as their domestic water source for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene.

BACKGROUND

For many years, the Calgary Health Region and other government agencies have expressed general concerns regarding the quality of well water in the hamlet of Bragg Creek. The Municipal District of Rockyview has placed some restrictions on development since the early 1970s. In 1990, water cisterns and pump-out sewage tanks were required for commercial development, and somewhat later for private residential development. In September 1998, the hamlet of Bragg Creek Area Redevelopment Plan was adopted, allowing no further subdivision or development until extensive groundwater testing is performed and a hamlet-wide solution is implemented.

In addition, Alberta Environment studies have found wells contaminated with Fecal Coliforms (FC)- about 6% of wells sampled in 1975 and about 15% in 1984. The 1984 Alberta Environment report concluded that there was evidence of groundwater contamination caused by on-site sewage disposal systems coming in contact with the high groundwater table, and that the level of contamination had increased since 1975.

When the Calgary Health Region gained health responsibility for the MD of Rockyview in 1995, a review of the private sewage disposal systems in the hamlet of Bragg Creek found significant evidence of inadequate sewage treatment in the community. A survey of well water in 1998 revealed that about 16% of wells were contaminated with FC. A more comprehensive study in 1999, in conjunction with the University of Calgary, revealed that 40% of the wells had coliforms, and that about 12% of these wells were contaminated with FC. This indicates widespread contamination of the local ground water and even wells showing no contamination on one sampling may show it on subsequent sampling.

The hamlet of Bragg Creek has several natural characteristics that contribute to the water situation: porous gravelly soil, a high groundwater table, and location in the 1:100 year floodway and flood fringe of the Elbow River. These characteristics make appropriate management of water issues very challenging in this area.

ISSUE

There is a potential risk of waterborne illness to residents who use untreated water, whether it is from a well or a surface supply. This risk is higher in the very young, the elderly and those with weak immune systems. Because of the contamination of groundwater in the hamlet, use of any untreated water from wells, particularly shallow wells or a surface supply, is a significant concern. There is less concern for residential or commercial water that is trucked in from reliable sources. It is our understanding that the school and all restaurants and businesses in the shopping centers have water trucked in, with this water often subjected to additional treatment and testing.

ACTION

At this time, the following steps are recommended to all hamlet residents to decrease the risk of acquiring waterborne illness.

1. No surface water should be used for domestic purposes without some form of treatment.
2. If you are drinking water from a private well or surface water supply, have it tested, particularly if it is shallow or has been found unsatisfactory on previous tests. Call the Environmental Health Program at 228-7570, weekdays from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, for testing details.
3. **To ensure the safety of your drinking water, we advise that you:**

- Bring your drinking water to a rapid, rolling boil for one minute; **OR,**
- Choose an alternate safe source of water; **OR,**
- Treat your water system using a point of use method such as chlorination, distillation, etc. Contact a technical expert for advice.

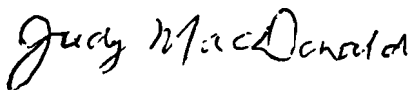
4. If you plan to sell or rent your property, inform prospective buyers or tenants of this water advisory so they understand what precautions to take.

Long term solutions need to be developed for the many unresolved issues related to water quality and sewage treatment in the hamlet of Bragg Creek. The Calgary Health Region is working with representatives from your community, the municipality, and the provincial government to seek an effective long term solution acceptable to residents that will ensure the safety of you and your family.

It is also important for residents to understand that the existing situation with respect to sewage treatment systems is no longer acceptable. If a communal sewage system is not put in place in the near future, then individual property owners will be required to take corrective action to repair private sewage disposal systems that are malfunctioning. Orders have not been issued at this point to give property owners the opportunity to focus their resources on a longer term solution.

If you have questions about this advisory, please contact the Environmental Health Program, at 228-7570.

Sincerely,



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