

To Mayor David Miller & Members of Toronto City Council

We can't afford to cut water safety!

The City of Toronto's proposed operating budget for water in 2010 includes staff cuts that will create a public safety risk if they go ahead.

I understand that times are tough and the city must look for efficiencies. But cutting 12 staff so that there is only one plant technician working on each shift does not make sense. In fact, city council rejected a similar proposal five years ago because of the risks to drinking water.

Right now there are two plant technicians in each of the City's water treatment plants on each shift, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The proposed operating budget assumes that half of these people can be replaced by automation. That's wrong because:

- Automation does not work 100% of the time. Automated chemical switch-overs are not working at all the plants and some are still done manually only.
- Equipment can break down, especially after increasingly frequent power outages. The single operator would have to leave the control room to manually fix the chemicals and reset pumps and other equipment.
- Response time to leaks of chlorine and other dangerous chemicals could be compromised. A sole operator cannot don a chemical suit and air pack without assistance.
- Problems can occur if a single operator is injured or falls ill on the job.

The safety of workers, the public and expensive equipment should not be threatened by staff cuts that will only save the City less than 1/3 of 1% of the operating budget.

Before rushing into a decision, please look for better ways to find efficiencies at Toronto Water. We can't afford to cut water safety!

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