



## MEDIA RELEASE

### Meter Tampering Won't Be Tolerated in Welland

**For Immediate Release – December 11, 2009 – 9:00 a.m.**

**Welland** – The City of Welland is well under way to completing its Water Meter Installation Program with approximately 97% of all residential properties having had a water meter installed. The Program hasn't been without its bumps along the way.

At the outset of the Water Meter Installation Program, the City hired Neptune Technology Group to carry out the work. In August of this year, a former subcontractor of Neptune, Hugh Davin McLaughlin, plead guilty to the charges against him for tampering with water meter installations in various Welland households between 2006 and 2008. Mr. McLaughlin was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$19,526 to the City of Welland, in addition to receiving 18 months probation and 100 hours of community service.

Once the City was made aware of the water meter tampering scheme, it provided an amnesty period to residents who took part in the scheme, with no repercussions if they came forward and had their meters inspected and repaired. However, five property owners who failed to come forward have had charges laid against them under the City's Water Management By-law with the possibility of criminal charges to follow.

As a consequence and in order to ensure all meters have been installed properly the City will continue to have water meter inspections performed periodically over the next several months by Neptune at its expense. Should a resident receive a Notice of Inspection he/she are encouraged to contact Neptune at his/her earliest opportunity to make the necessary arrangements. Contact information will be clearly outlined on the Notice.

Erik Nickel, P.Eng., the City's Special Projects Engineer is taking a hard stance on meter tampering. "Meter tampering is essentially theft; whether you are stealing water for business use or at home for personal use the City is taking a zero tolerance stance in an effort to ensure we can keep water and sewer rates as low as possible", says Nickel. "We have several methods of identifying homes and businesses that, in essence, may be stealing water and we are being proactive in following up as these instances arise."

The City makes every effort to communicate to residents who have had a water meter installed the ways that a resident can ensure their water meter is operating properly. A flyer is provided to residents following installation of their meter that contains important information about their new water meter, including normal usage breakdown for an average home, how to read the new meter, how to tell if and when there is a leak, as well as water conservation tips. Furthermore, the City is urging residents to periodically check the red triangle on their water meter when all water sources are turned off. If the triangle is spinning there may be a leaky toilet or tap, which will drive up the resident's water and sewer bill. In this case, residents are encouraged to get their system inspected and have any leaks repaired as soon as possible. Generally speaking, as a result of meter installations and conservation efforts, many residents have experienced a reduction in their water and sewer bills.

"In an effort to help residents conserve water, the City offers a rebate program if a resident chooses to install new high-efficiency toilets or washing machines in their home", advises Nickel. "The program runs until December 31 of this year and rebates amount to \$60 for an approved toilet and \$100 for approved clothes washing machines. We've seen an excellent response to this rebate program and there's still time to submit rebate forms."

For more information about water meters and water conservation tips as well as the rebate forms for approved washing machines and toilets visit [www.welland.ca/Eng/WaterMeters.asp](http://www.welland.ca/Eng/WaterMeters.asp) or [www.welland.ca/Conservation/index.asp](http://www.welland.ca/Conservation/index.asp) or call (905) 735-1700 ext. 2217.

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