

For Immediate Release  
June 23, 2006

## **'FESTIVAL U WASH' AND MANAGER FINED TOTAL OF \$75,000**

**STRATFORD**—McHugh Holdings Inc. and Timothy McHugh were fined a total of \$75,000 today, after each was convicted of violating a section of the *Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)*.

McHugh Holdings Inc. operates a self-service car wash under the name Festival U Wash, at 401 Erie Street in Stratford. Timothy McHugh manages the car wash.

The Court heard that on March 7, 2005 a Stratford resident contacted the Municipal Works Department when she discovered pink-coloured water coming from the taps in her home. Upon official confirmation of the claim, both municipal and provincial officials implemented emergency procedures across the city. A Drinking Water Advisory was issued, and drinking water depots were set up to make clean drinking water available to local residents.

Within approximately the three following hours, flyers alerting residents to the situation were delivered to all 10,000 to 12,000 homes in Stratford by fire fighters and other municipal workers.

City plumbing inspectors discovered that an unauthorized cross-connection between the Festival U Wash plumbing system and the city water plumbing system had inadvertently been opened, allowing car wash water to flow into the city's distribution system. The car wash water was responsible for the pink colour in the city's system.

The Court heard that the main contaminant of concern was a chemical called 2-butoxy-ethanol, which the local Medical Officer of Health (MOH) warned could cause gastrointestinal upset and irritation, but was not associated with long-term or chronic illnesses. Approximately 19 people reported to the Emergency Department at Stratford General Hospital with symptoms that were consistent with 2-butoxy-ethanol exposure. None had to be admitted. The hospital however, did cancel some surgeries and redirected dialysis patients to two other hospitals.

Both the Catholic and Public School Boards closed all schools in Stratford on March 8, because of the tainted water. A total of 6,000 students were affected by these closures.

The local MOH was also concerned about the potential for *E.coli* contamination from dirt, grit and petroleum hydrocarbons that could have been in the car wash water. However, extensive testing and analysis of water samples revealed no trace of *E.coli* in the water.

The Court was told that municipal and provincial officials' extraordinary efforts undoubtedly prevented the contamination from spreading further and kept the situation under control.

The Drinking Water Advisory was downgraded to a Boil Water Advisory on March 8, and in the early evening on March 9, the Boil Water Advisory was lifted.

Following an investigation conducted by the ministry's Investigations and Enforcement Branch, charges were laid.

McHugh Holdings Inc. and Timothy McHugh were each found guilty of one count of causing or permitting a substance to enter a drinking water system that interfered with the normal operation of the system, contrary to section 20(1)(c) of the *SDWA*. They were fined \$70,000 and \$5,000 respectively, plus a victim fine surcharge.

Justice of the Peace Robert M. Seneshen sentenced the company and Timothy McHugh on Friday June 23, 2006 in the Ontario Court of Justice in Stratford.

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Contacts:  
John Steele  
Communications Branch  
(416) 314-6666

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