

For Immediate Release
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REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK FINED \$50,000 FOR SEWAGE DISCHARGE INTO TANNERY CREEK

RICHMOND HILL—The Regional Municipality of York was fined \$50,000, plus a victim fine surcharge, after pleading guilty to one count of permitting the discharge of untreated sewage into Tannery Creek.

The Regional Municipality of York owns and operates a sewage pumping station that pumps raw, untreated sewage from the Towns of Aurora and Newmarket—which have a combined population of approximately 115,000 people—into a sewage treatment plant. The station has back-up generators that are used when the main electricity fails.

The Court heard that on August 14, 2003, during a massive power failure that affected most of Ontario and parts of the northeast United States, the back-up generators at pumping station failed for a stretch of time between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. This led to an overflow of sewage from the pumping station into the adjacent Tannery Creek. Staff was able to restart the back-up generators and bring the overflow under control.

The overflowing sewage contained significant quantities of e-coli, which could have posed serious human health threats, and concentrations of ammonia that were toxic to aquatic life. The overflow was also responsible for an oxygen depletion that asphyxiated fish and other aquatic life.

In addition, the sewage travelled downstream to Fairy Lake, where hundreds of dead fish were found in the days following the overflow.

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

The Municipality pleaded guilty to one count of permitting the discharge of a contaminant into Tannery Creek that had the potential to impair water quality, contrary to section 30(1) of the *Ontario Water Resources Act*, and was fined \$50,000.

Justice of the Peace Philip Solomon sentenced the Municipality on June 12, 2006, in the Ontario Court of Justice in Richmond Hill.

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