



HAMILTON-WENTWORTH WATER: BACK IN PUBLIC HANDS

Hamilton-Wentworth water was sold to Philip Utilities Management Corporation in 1994 under a 10 year, \$187 million contract. The company then changed hands four times, ultimately leaving Hamilton's water owned by the American Water Services Canada Corp.

In 2004, the contract came up. All of the private sector bids were higher than the cost of running the facilities publicly.

In addition to the high cost issue, the private operators had found ways to avoid the risk of running the water plants, leaving the city to pick up the tab.

Another contract loophole meant that the corporation was only responsible for maintenance and repairs that cost under \$10,000. This proved to be an incentive for the private contractors to let repairs slide until the cost was over the \$10,000 threshold.

The lack of public oversight and secrecy was also a problem. One City Councillor had to file a Freedom of Information request to try and uncover how much the city was paying for maintenance and repairs.

Responsibility for cleaning up a major sewage spill into Lake Ontario fell entirely on the City. The full cost of the cleanup was never made public.

With such obvious high costs, avoidance of risk by the private operators, environmental damage and secrecy, plus major opposition to private contractors by community activists, Hamilton City Council voted to take back the operation and maintenance of the City's water and wastewater treatment plants into public hands.

Hamilton citizens can now look forward to a community water system that costs less and is more accountable to their community.

Secret deals won't improve public services.

OFL Expose and Oppose Campaign, 2006