

Town of Wadena Water plant reservoirs get green light

By Anne Sanderson

The town of Wadena does not have to worry about a Walkerton disaster.

Last week the reservoirs at the Water Treatment Plant received an excellent grade, both in terms of the reservoir structure and the quality of the water.

The good news was unveiled following a thorough cleaning conducted by robotic machines.

Armed with a robotic eye that transmitted images onto a television set, the little machines did not detect any structural problems and the cleaning brush rooted up a remarkably low volume of sediment.

The *News* interviewed Trevor Klock who was in charge of the inspection. He said Wadena residents are very fortunate. Not only does Wadena have a very high quality of raw water, the current chemical treatment appears to be working "very well".

According to current drinking water regulations, municipalities are required to conduct a thorough cleaning and inspection every five years or so.

The regulations are not surprising considering the disaster that happened back in Walkerton back in 2000. Seven people died and an estimated 2,500 people became ill, when their water supply



Trevor Klock watches a television screen as a tiny robotic machine cleans the bottom of the reservoirs at the town of Wadena's water treatment plant last week.

became contaminated with a highly dangerous strain of E. coli bacteria that was the result of farm runoff into an adjacent well vulnerable to contamination.

Last week's inspection helps to avoid that type of situation.

"When we do our inspection we make sure that there are no cracks or signs of deterioration to the structure – so far Wadena's looks very good," Klock said.

In addition to giving the

process is so important. Klock offered a simple analysis.

"What we tell people is that by putting clean water into a dirty glass you are basically contaminating it," he said. "By doing this cleaning we are making sure the glass is clean."

The way the inspection is done is actually quite interesting. Initially a machine called a Seamor

Rover is immersed into the reservoir. It contains a high-resolution camera zoom lens that allows viewing of surfaces up to 1/32 of an inch with bright illumination and high-quality images.

The purpose of the machine is to conduct a visual inspection of the walls, floor and support columns. Even the caulking, the expansion joints

and the inlet and outlet pipes are scrutinized to ensure that there are no irregularities that could allow infiltration. The machine is apparently so sensitive it can even detect water patterns and leaks that could be missed by conventional methods.

The next step is to lower the 24" crawler machine, which is capable of cleaning up to 1,000 sq. feet an hour and can handle solids up to .5 inches in diameter.

All of the visuals are recorded onto a DVD, which can then be supplied to the customer for future reference and used as proof should the quality of the water come into question.

In an interview Monday, town superintendent Ron Babyck acknowledged that staff was somewhat surprised with the results of the report. There have been some instances of brown water in the community recently and town staff was hopeful that the

cleaning process might shed some light on what was causing the colouring. However, there could be some answers yet. Apparently due to the size of the manhole, Klock was unable to do the main reservoir under the water treatment plant. As that reservoir is the one that the water feeds in and out of, staff suspect more sediment may be found there. After some revisions to the equipment, that part of the project was scheduled to get underway yesterday. Babyck said if the water ends up being clear in that reservoir too, he really does not know what the next alternative is. Already staff has conducted an additional round of line flushing in an attempt to resolve the problem.

As for the cost of the most recent cleaning, a project the size of Wadena's could take up to a two to three days. The total cost of the service runs about \$3,000 a day.

structure a green light, Klock could not say enough about the quality of Wadena water.

He noted that he had just been in a community and was barely able to see two feet in front of the camera.

"They had so much sediment that we could barely see anything, but here I am able to see four to six feet in front – although it's not so good for us it is very good for you – very little sediment is a really good sign," he told *Wadena News*.

When asked to explain why