

Jennifer Baron
Sutton Resident

March 30th, 2025

Dear Mayor Quirk and Georgina Town Councillors:

Thank you for accepting my letter in support of Councillor Dave Neeson's Notice of Motion on sodium chloride, aka road salt, and public health concerns. In January of 2025 I began to notice that my tap water tasted "soft" as though there was salt in it. My husband, Mark, and I began researching this, and were surprised to read that Georgina has had adverse sodium reports in our drinking water for many years now. We learned that: "Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority researchers estimate that each year we put down the equivalent of 100,000 tonnes of salt in the Lake Simcoe watershed alone (<https://lsrca.on.ca/index.php/watershed-health/salt/>). My husband had a heart attack in 2020 and now lives with heart disease, requiring that he adheres to low sodium intake. We read on the Town of Georgina's Drinking Water Report web page that: "Both the Region and Town have reported an average sodium concentration of elevated levels:

- 2019: 34 mg/L Region Report
- 2020: 32.3 to 32.5mg/L Regional Report
- 2023: 34-36 mg/L Town of Georgina Report

As such, sodium in drinking water is not a health concern for the majority of people, however, those with conditions affected by sodium intake should consult with their physician on consumption of Town-supplied drinking water."

(<https://www.georgina.ca/living-here/water-and-wastewater/drinking-water-reports>)

As most are aware, heart disease is the leading cause of death globally. We all know that excessive sodium intake can raise blood pressure and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, as high sodium leads to fluid retention, increasing blood volume and putting extra strain on the heart. So the research Mark and I did raised our concerns over the salt levels in our drinking water. We also noticed that Georgina's adverse sodium reports come from tests done in September, the farthest time in the year from when we add road salt to surfaces such as sidewalks and highways in the winter months, so we wondered if in January, when I began to notice a salty taste to the water, if it is even higher at that time of the year. I did a little experiment with evaporating tap water in a dish, and I was alarmed to see how much salt residue was left behind. See picture below.



Salt residue after tap water evaporation, January/February 2025. Photo: J. Baron

The human body is over 60% water. We quite literally are what we drink, and humans are not meant to drink salt water. Obviously freshwater species in Lake Simcoe will also experience adverse effects from adding salt into the watershed. The addition of 100,000T of road salt annually into Lake Simcoe is alarming, and I believe it's a noteworthy public health concern.

Mark installed a reverse osmosis system in our home, and the result of the taste of our tap water and feeling refreshed is noticeably positive. However, this type of desalination system on a grand scale is not feasible, nor should it ever become necessary in Ontario, home to the largest sources of freshwater in the world. I hope that the Town of Georgina adopts the use of less road salt via the recommendations in Councillor Neeson's Motion, and influences the province to follow suit.

I also hope that the Town of Georgina could lead a public education campaign for businesses and homeowners to reduce their use of sodium chloride. Salt is a highly effective solute in water. It looks as though it just disappears, but it does not. In the spring when it rains heavily, the salt dissolves in the rainwater and gets washed into the watershed. If residents and business owners understood that doing simple things such as sweeping up excessive salt prior to spring rain events would help reduce the inflow of sodium chloride into our fresh water systems, I believe people would do their part to help. Another positive side effect: reducing the use of sodium chloride would protect cars and buildings from the harmful effects of corrosion. In conclusion, we would all be safer and healthier for doing our part to reduce the flow of salt into our drinking water sources and freshwater ecosystems. A positive step forward would be to adopt Councillor Neeson's Motion.

Thank you.

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