



**WATERLOOCHRONICLE** <http://waterloochronicle.ca/news/article/216414>

## Tapped out — city hall staffers now drinking filtered water

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Coun. Angela Vieth

Considering how touchy a subject water has become, Waterloo city Coun. Angela Vieth is wondering about the optics of providing free filtered water to city hall staffers.

What about taxpayers who might like their own filtered water system, asked Vieth, but can't afford to pay for it and are now paying for a service only available to city hall staffers. She suggests that those behind the plan have a "tin ear" while the debate over what's in the local water rages with a plebiscite on water fluoridation set for this fall's municipal election.

"With fluoride on the ballot, I can't believe it," said an exasperated Vieth. "It's like when they brought the water wagon idea to council to be approved.

"This is just ridiculous."

A note went out last week to all city staffers about a new water bottle filling station only available to staffers in their second floor lunchroom. It is directly connected to a hard water line, bypassing the water softener.

More importantly, the water is going through a filtration system that is taking the water down to five microns, which means that for every one million particles of water there are only up to five impurities getting through.

Carol Schiller, a member of the city's human resources department who put out the note, told staffers as a comparison the average bottle of water is allowed to have 10 or more microns. The new service for staffers is also purer than the tap water being served at local establishments.

Schiller said the issue at City Hall was that the water fountains didn't have big enough spouts to put a water bottle under them to refill them. It's a service provided at other locations around the city, mostly at community arenas.

This was just meant to give city staffers the same opportunity, and to cut down on the use of bottled water and the waste it generates.

"It's not really that big news, but to us it was, because before we had no way to fill a reusable bottle," said Schiller.

But Vieth argues that's its better quality water than most Waterloo taxpayers are getting in their own homes.

And there is a real concern about what's in the water from the people she's talked to while campaigning in her ward.

"I just couldn't believe this was allowed to happen," said Vieth, not sure who originated the idea at City Hall. "If you're at a company and you want to provide filtered water, that's OK to provide employees that service.

"But is it OK for taxpayers to pay for filtered water for city employees when many taxpayers can't afford to have filtered water themselves?

"Why do you have to filter your water anyways?"

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