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Lab used for water testing is subject of criminal investigation

HAMILTON, ONTARIO — The Canadian Ministry of the Environment has banned using a laboratory in Hamilton to perform tests on drinking water or anything else. The action comes in the wake of a police investigation into alleged fraudulent test results from the facility.

The ministry told its staff and all organizations it regulates to stop using environmental test results from Fine Analysis Laboratories Limited, a soil, water and drug-testing lab, the government said in a press release.

Ministry staff has been instructed to no longer accept any Fine Analysis Laboratories analytical results submitted by either the lab itself, or by laboratories using the company as a sub-contractor, officials said.

The Ministry of the Environment said any organization that used the lab should undertake immediate retesting of any results and should notify the ministry immediately of any suspect results that are identified as a result of retesting, as well as outline a course of action to rectify the problem.

The ministry said it will notify municipal waterworks owners, municipal landfill operations, industrial landfill operations, hazardous and liquid industrial waste management facilities—including generators, haulers and receivers—and environmental consulting companies about its actions regarding Fine Analysis Laboratories.

On 12 February, Hamilton police executed two search warrants at the lab.

According to the *Toronto Star*, agencies are examining thousands of files seized in a police raid on the firm's premises last week. Two people — a woman employee of the lab and a male former employee — were arrested and will be charged with conspiracy to commit uttering a forged document, police said.

Police continue to look for evidence supporting the allegation of a conspiracy within the company to forge documents called used to meet federal, provincial and international quality standards, the newspaper said.

The newspaper reported that Alan Gold, an attorney retained by the lab, said it is his understanding is that if there were inaccuracies on certificates, they were inconsequential and did not affect public health and safety.

The Ministry of the Environment has been assisting Hamilton police in their investigation since the ministry brought concerns about the possibility of forged analysis to the attention of the police in January 2001, the government said.

The ministry said it has notified owners of three municipal waterworks, as well as the Standards Council of Canada and the Canadian Association of Environmental Analytical Laboratories, about the police investigation.