

Process for Appeals - Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Works Committee recommends the adoption of the following report (November 18, 1999) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services:

Purpose:

To report on guidelines and criteria to be followed by Community Councils when considering appeals regarding the Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy, and on how this program can be dovetailed or harmonized with the City's Water Service Connection Repair Program.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Anticipated enhanced grants due to approved appeals will increase the Water and Wastewater operating budget for the Tree Root Removal and Grant Program by an estimated \$35,000.00 annually.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services submit a report to the appropriate Community Council for each appeal submitted to the City. The Community Council will review each case individually and make recommendations to Council for enhanced grants; and
- (2) the Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy not be dovetailed or harmonized with the Water Service Connection Repair Program.

Background:

City Council at its meeting of May 11 and 12, 1999, amended Clause No. 3 of Report No. 7 of The Works and Utilities Committee, headed "Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy", to require that the authority for appeals under the subject Program be delegated to the Community Council.

As a consequence, Council also requested that the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services:

- “(d) submit a report to the Works Committee on:
- (i) guidelines and criteria to be followed by Community Councils in the implementation of this policy; and
 - (ii) how the Sewer Repair Program can dovetail or be harmonized with the City of Toronto’s lead pipe replacement program.”

Comments:

Drain Grant Programs were administered in all six former municipalities. Guidelines and criteria, however, were different. The recently approved Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy ensure common guidelines and criteria across the City.

Although a formalized Appeal Process only existed in the former City of Toronto, the various Works Committees/Councils considered “appeals” in the other former municipalities as well. Records indicate that a total of approximately 200 appeals have been considered over the last three years in the former municipalities with the majority (approximately 140) in the former City of Toronto.

An appeal to the City for an enhanced grant can be submitted by an applicant/owner only when the total repairs exceed the current grant maximum of \$1,500.00 for replacements, \$500.00 for a partial repair, or if the grant application had been denied. The repair/replacement cost and the nature of the work and the circumstances may vary greatly from residence to residence.

It is expected that an estimated, average enhanced award of \$500.00 per appeal will cost an additional \$35,000.00 per year. The cost of the program is currently carried in the operating budget. Therefore, it is recommended that any time a homeowner appeals for an enhanced grant, a report is to be submitted to the Community Council by the Department, detailing the homeowner’s request, the background information, any extenuating circumstances and nature of the repairs. The applicant/owner will be invited for deputation to the Community Council, who will review on a case by case basis and will recommend to Council any enhanced grant to be given to the applicant/owner.

It is impractical and virtually impossible to dovetail the “Sewer Repair Program” (Sewer Connection Blockage Inspection and Repair Program, and Tree Root Removal and Grants Policy) with the City’s “Lead Pipe Replacement Program” (Water Service Replacement Program). The two are not related (and very rarely occur concurrently) and are carried out for different purposes. The first is only a grant program intended to provide financial assistance to a homeowner where the City-owned tree roots penetrate/damage the private portion of the private drain. The second rehabilitates (improves) the City asset (i.e., the City’s portion of the water service connection), by replacing the substandard residential water service in order to provide quality water service to the residents.

It is therefore recommended that the “Sewer Repair Program” not be dovetailed with the “Water Service Connection Repair Program”.

Contact:

David Parrish, Director
Water and Wastewater Operations
Districts 1 and 2
Telephone: (416) 392-1846
Fax: (416) 392-0396

Mario Crognale, Director
Water and Wastewater Operations
Districts 3 and 4
Telephone: (416) 395-6219
Fax: (416) 395-6320