

Summer Outdoor Water Use Policy

(City Council on July 4, 5 and 6, 2000, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Works Committee recommends:

- (1) the adoption of the following report (May 31, 2000) from the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services; and**
- (2) that the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services be requested to develop signage for use on lawns, similar to that used by homeowners banning the use of pesticides:**

Purpose:

To establish a Summer Outdoor Water Use Policy to reduce overall outdoor water use during the summer and ultimately restrict maximum day consumption to less than 2100 million litres per day, the current system design capacity.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Funding of \$255,000.00 for public education and communications activities in support of the City's water efficiency initiatives is provided through the 2000 Works and Emergency Services Department's Operating Budget.

No additional funding is required.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) a Summer Outdoor Water Use Policy be implemented consisting of:
 - (a) the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services will issue an 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory' when summer water consumption approaches the system's design capacity, requesting customers to eliminate lawn watering and curtail all other outdoor water use while it is in effect;
 - (b) the existing outdoor water efficiency public education program will continue to encourage customers to water their lawns no more than once a week and to water during off-peak hours, and will be expanded to include information about the 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory'; and
 - (c) all landscape irrigation systems operated by the City, with the exception of those servicing specific critical areas (e.g., golf courses, high end turf areas and new

tree planting sites), will not operate during periods when the 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory' is in effect;

- (2) York Region be requested to implement a similar Summer Outdoor Water Use Policy and outdoor water efficiency public education program and notify its residents when the 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory' is issued by the City; and
- (3) the appropriate City officials be granted the authority necessary to give effect thereto.

Council Reference/Background/History:

At its meeting of November 3, 1999, the Works Committee requested the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services to report back to the Works Committee with regard to the implementation of a Summer Water Use By-law for the City of Toronto in the year 2000.

The Environmental Task Force on July 20, 1999, endorsed a Motion by Councillor Saundercook with regard to the implementation of a Summer Water Use By-law and directed the Works Committee to be advised accordingly. The Motion requested that the by-law consider the following:

- (1) 'staged' or 'set-up' scaling that incorporates voluntary measures;
- (2) even-odd lawn watering by street number;
- (3) restrictions based on time of day;
- (4) restrictions on washing exterior building surfaces, parking lots, driveways or sidewalks;
- (5) exemptions for property owners or occupiers who by reason of advanced age or disability are unable to water their property within restricted times and days;
- (6) exemptions for properties with new lawns, either newly seeded or new sod;
- (7) other exempted users such as nurseries, farms, turf or tree farms, and other areas such as parks, playing fields and public gardens where failure to water would result in a permanent loss of plant material; and
- (8) any other measures deemed appropriate by the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services.

Comments and/or Discussion and/or Justification:

The City is developing a Water Efficiency Plan which seeks to reduce maximum day water demands to provide capital works deferrals in Water Supply, and average annual day water demands to provide capital works deferrals in Water Pollution Control. Through the development of the Water Efficiency Plan, various cost-effective implementation measures are

being investigated to reduce water consumption. The implementation of measures to reduce summer outdoor water use will result in reductions of maximum day water demands.

The current design capacity of the City's water supply system is about 2100 million litres per day. In 1999, the City's average annual day and maximum day demands were approximately 1500 and 2220 million litres per day, respectively. The maximum day water demands are generally associated with prolonged periods of little or no precipitation and result in a high volume of outdoor water use for landscape irrigation.

Under a 1998 agreement between the City of Toronto and York Region, the City will provide York Region up to an average day supply of 259 million litres per day and maximum day supply of 440 million litres per day.

Mandatory outdoor water use restrictions, directed at reducing lawn watering consumption, have been used by many municipalities attempting to reduce peak water demand during the summer months. Difficulties experienced by municipalities that have implemented these types of mandatory programs include:

- lack of enforcement because these types of regulations are generally difficult to administer, costly to enforce and penalties for illegal watering are usually limited to a warning, and generally not supported by the public because they are inconvenient and represent increased government control;
- increased water consumption in some cases because when water use is restricted and permitted based on even-odd addresses, or day of the week, residents will avail themselves of lawn watering, even if it is not required, on the days permitted; and
- additional expense associated with developing and implementing articulated public information and communication programs, necessary for the successful implementation of the program.

The City of Toronto has been successful in reducing maximum day water demands during the summer months through the implementation of a comprehensive outdoor water efficiency public education program. This program was initiated by the former Metropolitan Toronto in 1993 and has continued annually. The program focuses on encouraging residents to water their lawns no more than once a week and to water during off-peak times from 11:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. The communications campaign supporting the public education program has evolved over time and now includes the following methods:

- Advertising: newspaper and transit shelter advertising along with multi-lingual radio advertisements in June and July;
- "Water Watch": residential newsletter delivered door-to-door with summer issue focussing on outdoor water efficiency;

- Water Month: activities throughout June promoting water efficiency, including demonstrations at Environment Days, distribution of free rain gauges, water filtration plant open house with outdoor water efficiency information;
- Media Relations: encouraging media articles promoting water efficient lawn/garden watering, free rain gauges and Peak Pail Kit sales;
- Display Program: outdoor water efficiency display used throughout the summer months at malls, fairs, shows, etc.;
- Plant Tours and Community Presentations: outdoor water efficiency information provided during tours and presentations;
- Promotional tools: the Peak Pail (containing outdoor water efficient devices and information), rain gauges (to measure rainfall or sprinkler use), outdoor tap hanger (to encourage correct watering habits);
- Information sources: City Web Site, Waste and Water Info Line, pamphlets, "From the Lake to You" video, water bills; and
- Waste and Water Information Line: recorded messages and questions answered by information officers.

The program has been considered successful in increasing public awareness of outdoor water use and has contributed to the reduction in the City's maximum day water consumption from a ten-year high of 2338 million litres per day in 1991 to an average maximum day consumption of 2052 million litres per day over the last five years.

The public have also been co-operative when called upon to curtail water use. In previous years, when water consumption peaked, exceeding the system's design capacity, water consumption was substantially reduced when local news media reported this condition in response to press releases.

For the reasons stated above, a voluntary rather than mandatory summer outdoor water use program is preferred.

Conclusions:

A voluntary City of Toronto Summer Outdoor Water Use Policy directed at reducing the City's water consumption during peak demand conditions is recommended over a mandatory program. Municipalities that have instituted mandatory programs have experienced difficulties with enforcement, increased water consumption in some cases and additional cost for administration and public education. Conversely, the City's ongoing outdoor water efficiency public education program has contributed to the reduction of the City's maximum day demand and should be continued.

The policy would draw on the positive response received from the media and the public when the need to curtail water use has arisen in the past, through the issuance of an 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory'. The advisory would be issued, proactively, when summer water consumption approaches the system's design capacity. The advisory would be complemented with updates and information on the City's web site and the Waste and Water Info Line. In support of the policy, all landscape irrigation systems operated by the City, with the exception of those servicing specific critical areas (e.g., golf courses, high end turf areas and new tree planting sites), would not operate during periods when the 'Outdoor Water Use Advisory' was in effect.

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