



To: Executive Committee
From: Councillor Mike Layton
Date: February 16, 2011

Re: Maintaining Toronto Water's Water Efficiency Rebate, Drain Grant and Downspout Disconnect Programs

Recommendations

1. That Agenda item 2a, recommendations 2, 4 and 28(a) be deleted.
2. That the Proposed Toronto Water 2011 operating and capital budgets be amended to:
 - a. Establish a grant-based Voluntary Downspout Disconnection Program with a maximum reimbursement of \$500 per household.
 - b. To reinstate the Drain Grant program.
 - c. To reinstate the Water Efficiency rebate program.
3. That the financial impact of Recommendation 2 above be offset as per Attachment 1, Wrap-up Notes to Budget Committee, January 25, 2011
4. That Toronto Water advise the public Works and Infrastructure Committee on 2012 improvements to the Water Efficiency rebate program to ensure eligibility be limited to fixtures and appliances with industry leading flow rates.

Background:

Toronto has implemented a comprehensive set of policies and programs for treating, conserving, and managing our water resources. These programs are popular with both a wide range of residents in Toronto, and with water conservation advocates across North America who recognize Toronto as a model for municipal water management.

Toronto's water programs not only benefit the environment and City's finances, they help real people manage water properly on their properties. The modest level of assistance provided to home owners helps the city meet its efficiency and management targets and involves homeowners in the process.



Helping Homeowners – Toronto's Drain Grants program

Since 1999, the City's Drain Grants Program has provided much needed support for drain repair to eligible homeowners who have undertaken repairs to their drains that have been blocked by roots of city-owned trees. Over the past three years alone, Toronto water has approved 8,534 applications for the Drain Grants program from across all 44 wards. There is currently already a backlog of 836 unanswered applications for 2011.

For many of Toronto's older neighbourhoods, where the roots of large trees often interact with the shifting clay drains of older homes, this problem comes as an unfortunate surprise to homeowners who are required to make repairs. The \$2,000 grant from the City covers only some of the costs of the repair, while the resident is obliged to cover the additional costs. For seniors on fixed incomes and families with young children, the financial impact can be severe.

Saving money and our drinking water – Voluntary Downspout Disconnection Program

As part of the Wet Weather Flow Master Plan, reducing storm water runoff into our sanitary sewers is an important part of reducing sewage overflows in our lakes and rivers, averting basement flooding in prone areas, and reducing demand on infrastructure.

For many years, the City provided free disconnection of downspouts for eligible homeowners to encourage those in areas with combined sewer service to disconnect their downspouts. In 2007, City Council adopted a Mandatory Downspout Disconnection programs and ended the city's voluntary disconnection program, leaving a long list of individuals waiting for inspections. At this time there is an estimated 13,000 properties that have applied for the program and are still awaiting inspection. These homeowners deserve the same treatment as the 21,817 taxpayers who have received inspections and the 6,704 who have had their disconnections completed. The program need not be scraped entirely.

Saving Water, Saving Money

One of the City's marquee programs is the City's Water Efficiency Plan (WEP), created under Mayor Mel Lastman and approved by City Council in 2003. The plan outlines actions that would allow the city to create additional capacity within its existing system, saving money by delaying or eliminating costly infrastructure expansions and allowing Toronto to sell off additional capacity to other municipalities.

While the province is mandating the sale of low-flow toilets in all new buildings, there is currently no incentive for homeowners to replace old and inefficient stock in older homes. This program provides that much needed incentive.