

City Council**Notice of Motion**

MM23.20	ACTION			Ward: All
---------	--------	--	--	-----------

Across Party Lines: Helping residents mitigate the impacts of party sewer systems - by Councillor Brad Bradford, seconded by Councillor Gary Crawford

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Brad Bradford, seconded by Councillor Gary Crawford, recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Toronto Water, working in consultation with relevant divisions, to explore opportunities to develop an information and education campaign on homes with Party Sewer Lines and develop resources and service improvements to support residents experiencing issues with them.

Summary

Many older homes in Toronto’s inner suburbs have a plumbing configuration that combines sewer access through a “party line” of neighbouring properties. A party sewer line is characterized by at least one private sewer crossing into a neighbouring property to join a single pipe, which then connects to the City’s public sewer line. These lines are on private property but are also shared infrastructure which can raise costly problems if a line is blocked or collapsed.

While this configuration has declined within modern building practices, many residents across the city could face costly repairs and complicated coordination issues with neighbours if they have to resolve a problem on a party line. It’s common for residents to be unaware that their home is connected to a party line. Given the age of these properties, there aren’t always drawings or plans available to locate the sewage connection. Unfortunately, a party line is often only discovered in the investigation that follows a flooded basement or plumbing back-up.

While incidents caused by a faulty party line are generally outside of the City’s responsibility, residents often look to the City for insights and solutions. Given the prevalence of this issue, and the likely growing need for attention as this infrastructure ages, the City could do more to inform residents that they might be on a party line, and help to support residents with information and resources to resolve potential issues with this type of plumbing configuration.

As our older neighbourhoods continue to age, their infrastructure is more likely to require attention. The City has previously endeavoured to increase understanding of issues that impact residents of older properties through efforts like the Lead in Drinking Water Mitigation Strategy and the Backflow Prevention Program. These programs are successfully raising awareness of health impacts and providing safety measures for private residences. This motion asks for the General Manager to explore opportunities to create a similar campaign around party sewer lines.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM23.20