

Sewer Line Block Service Standards and Improving Response

Date: July 5, 2024

To: Service Excellence Committee

From: General Manager, Toronto Water

Wards: All

SUMMARY

At its meeting on April 9, 2024, the Executive Committee requested that Infrastructure Services divisions provide updates regarding service standards and opportunities for improving responses and response times to service requests.

In response to this request, Toronto Water has prepared a brief presentation that highlights the Division's strategic customer service objectives, Key Performance Indicators used to monitor progress towards these goals and provides a discussion of Toronto Water's most frequently requested service, "Sewer Line Block Service," as well as work conducted to improve the response service standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Toronto Water recommends that:

1. Executive Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact statement.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 9, 2024, the Executive Committee requested Integrated Service Divisions provide updates with respect to service standards and opportunities for improving responses and response times to service requests, as part of future reports on Customer Service Requests. Link: [Agenda Item History - 2024.EX13.14 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

COMMENTS

Toronto Water Strategic Plan & Key Performance Indicators

Toronto Water is responsible for all aspects of drinking water treatment and supply, wastewater collection and treatment, and stormwater management.

To guide its operations, the Division established a Strategic Plan in 2010, incorporating five Guiding Principles to focus efforts and resources toward achieving its objectives. In 2020, Toronto Water updated its Strategic Plan with a heightened emphasis on "Customer-Centric Service," ensuring focus and resources are directed towards:

- Expanding access to programs and services,
- Effectively communicating with customers, and
- Enhancing the customer experience and customer satisfaction.

Since 2010, Toronto Water has created over 100 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) closely aligned with its Strategic Plan. These KPIs serve as measurable benchmarks to monitor progress, track performance trends, and provide the data essential for informed decision-making throughout the organization, from tactical plans and operational adjustments to strategic investments.

One notable source of performance information is the 311 response time metrics.

Sewer Line Blocked Service Standard

"Sewer Line Blockage" was the most frequent Toronto Water service request received by 311 in 2023, totaling 7,626 requests.

A sewer line blockage occurs due to debris, grease deposits, tree roots, or broken/defective pipes. This blockage prevents the proper drainage of wastewater from the property to the City's sewer system in the street. Residents call 311 when they experience symptoms of a sewer line block, the most serious of which is wastewater backing up through the basement drains or other fixtures.

The "Sewer Line Blocked" service standard requires that Toronto Water respond to a request for service within four hours. This involves Toronto Water visiting the property to evaluate the issue and results, if necessary, in the generation of a work order for maintenance or repair activities. Toronto Water met this response service standard 86% of the time on 2023.

Improving Response

Toronto Water is committed to continuous improvement and seeks opportunities to advance its Customer Centric Service objectives. Specifically for the sewer line block service request, Toronto Water utilized its customer journey mapping tool to assess a recent customer interaction, identifying process improvements to enhance "Sewer Line Blocked" responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

Recently, a local restaurant experienced a blocked sewer line, leading to a 12-day closure while the City resolved the issue. Site conditions were the primary reason for the prolonged repair, however, using the Customer Journey Mapping method, Toronto Water identified opportunities to enhance work management processes by addressing gaps in the escalation process. The Toronto Water Customer Care Centre is currently reviewing procedures for escalating open service requests that require extended time or extra visits to complete an investigation and are, therefore, still waiting for final repair/maintenance work orders to be assigned to crews, particularly those directly affecting businesses.

Other improvement activities aimed at advancing Toronto Water's customer service objectives include:

- Completing an organizational effectiveness review of the Toronto Water Customer Care Centre,
- Creating a new Technology & Customer Experience section to focus on customer services,
- Ongoing efforts to refresh and realign the Strategic Plan and KPIs,
- Making web forms available for several Toronto Water customer programs,
- Introducing new mobile tools to provide customers with an ETA for Toronto Water staff visits,
- Implementing the One Contact Resolution initiative, and
- Enhancing caller wait times initiative.

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SIGNATURE

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