

Residents Affected by August 23, 2023 Sewer Backup
South MacNab Street
Forest, ON N0N 1J0

November 16, 2023

Scott Ferguson
The Municipality of Lambton Shores
9577 Port Franks Road
Thedford, ON N0M 2N0

Cc: City Council
Cc.: Municipal Clerk

Dear Councillor Ferguson,

Re: September 28th meeting of homeowners on south MacNab with Nick Verhoeven

We are writing to express our disappointment that you were unable to attend the meeting with the Director of Public Works, Nick Verhoeven, on September 28th to discuss the August 23rd sewer backup that flooded seven homes on south MacNab Street with septic sewage.

While some operational questions were answered at the meeting, others involve policy decisions that will require Council involvement. We are therefore summarizing our concerns below, with copies to the rest of Council. While Mr. Verhoeven indicated a two-week timeframe for addressing our queries, we have yet to receive any updates despite waiting for six weeks. We are disappointed by this delay and hope to receive a prompt response.

Notable points from our meeting include:

- Rainwater should not enter the sanitary sewer system, but flow data from pumping stations and the treatment plant shows that it does.
- The probable cause of exceeding the system capacity is ingress from downspouts, weeping tiles, and sump pumps connected to the sanitary system. A by-law prohibits this, but it has not been enforced, and homeowners have not been educated about the issue.
- The municipality has not required that new homes have backwater valves.
- The mixture of sewer effluent and stormwater contained a light tan-coloured sediment that looked like clay. While wet, it was slippery, and it caked when dry. We are concerned that this sediment may have entered the sanitary system from the new development upstream from the flooded homes.

- Our municipality does not measure up to the standard of practice followed in other municipalities. For example, Halton Region educates and subsidizes homeowners to disconnect stormwater cross-connections. In the event of a problem with the municipal system causing damage, a grant covers insurance deductible. [https://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Water-and-Environment/Wastewater/Taking-Action-Wastewater-\(Sewage\)-Backups-in-Hom](https://www.halton.ca/For-Residents/Water-and-Environment/Wastewater/Taking-Action-Wastewater-(Sewage)-Backups-in-Hom)

Our meeting left our concerns unaddressed. We feel that the municipality has not met the standard of care that residents should expect.

We ask Council to consider the following:

- It is reasonably foreseeable, given past backup incidents, flow data, and climate change, that damage to property would occur. Has Council considered such information and made any policy decisions on how to mitigate the risk to homeowners?
- We were told that there are plans to study the sanitary system and that this might include implementing standards of practice already in place in other municipalities. We feel there is an urgent need to assist property owners already affected so they need not worry every time there is a rainstorm. Can anything be done while waiting for the political process to run its course? Examples from Warwick and Sarnia: [Enhanced Basement Flooding Prevention Subsidy – Application Form \(warwicktownship.ca\)](https://www.sarnia.ca/app/uploads/2022/11/Basement-Flooding-Grant-Program-Property-Owner-Guide.pdf) <https://www.sarnia.ca/app/uploads/2022/11/Basement-Flooding-Grant-Program-Property-Owner-Guide.pdf>
- Two of the seven affected houses were also flooded with sanitary sewer effluent in May. Has Council considered how failing to provide adequate wastewater service will increase insurance rates in our communities and even limit access to coverage?
- Once the source of the silt in the black water has been determined, what will be done to correct the problem? Were errors made in planning the system in the new development? Were appropriate inspections carried out?

We appreciate your time and consideration of our concerns. We request you consider the following reasonable recommendations:

1. As is currently done in Warwick, cover 100% of the costs for affected property owners to install a backwater valve.
2. As is done in Halton Region when the blockage occurs on the municipal side of the wastewater system, provide a grant of \$1000 to offset the cost of the insurance deductible or other flooding-related costs.
3. Investigate how stormwater and silt are getting into the sanitary system and communicate to the affected property owners what actions will be taken to prevent recurrence.
4. Consider appropriate measures to enforce the by-law prohibiting storm water connections to the sanitary sewer.

Sincerely,

Concerned Homeowners:

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