

**Subject: Residential Protective Plumbing and Compassionate Grant Program
– Review and Proposed By-law and Program Updates**

File Number: ACS2025-IWS-WL-0007

**Report to Environment and Climate Change Committee on 18 February 2025
and Council 26 February 2025**

Submitted on February 6, 2025 by

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Ward: Citywide

**Objet : Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires
résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout et
Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle – Examen et
mises à jour proposées du Règlement municipal et des programmes**

Numéro de dossier : ACS2025-IWS-WL-0007

Rapport présenté au Comité de l'environnement et du changement climatique

Rapport soumis le 6 février 2025

et au Conseil le 26 février 2025

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REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Environment and Climate Change Committee recommend Council:

- 1. Approve the proposed changes to the Residential Protective Plumbing program as outlined in this report, and the associated by-law, substantially in the form attached as Document 1, to be in effect April 1, 2025; and,**
- 2. Approve the proposed changes to the Compassionate Grant program as outlined in this report.**

RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité de l'environnement et du changement climatique recommande au Conseil municipal :

- 1. d'approuver les modifications que la Ville propose d'apporter au Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires selon les modalités exposées dans ce rapport, ainsi que dans le règlement municipal correspondant, essentiellement selon la forme reproduite dans la Pièce 1 ci-jointe, pour que ce programme produise ses effets le 1^{er} avril 2025;**
- 2. d'approuver les modifications que la Ville propose d'apporter au Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle selon les modalités exposées dans ce rapport.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Residential Protective Plumbing By-Law is being brought forward to revise the existing program and by-law and provide recommendations for Council's consideration. Additionally, staff recognize the need to undergo a program review for the Compassionate Grant program as there are correlations between the two programs. This report will also include recommendations for the Compassionate Grant program for Council's consideration.

The Residential Protective Plumbing program provides financial assistance to eligible City of Ottawa homeowners for the installation of protective plumbing devices such as sump pumps and storm and sanitary backwater valves, to prevent sewage or stormwater from entering homes through service connections or laterals during a sewer surcharge event.

The proposed changes to the Residential Protective Plumbing program and the associated by-law are intended to increase awareness, simplify the application process, and improve support for residents.

The Compassionate Grant program provides \$1,000 in funding to eligible City of Ottawa residents affected by recurring flooding due to sewer surcharging. The proposed changes to the Compassionate Grant program are intended to increase participation, simplify the application process, and improve support for residents.

This report and recommendations also address the Residential Protective Plumbing program feedback that has been received, notably that the application process has too many forms and steps which made it difficult to navigate; the closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection made the process longer and more expensive; and that the available funding for individual applicants was insufficient.

The proposed updates to the Residential Protective Plumbing program and the associated by-law simplify the application process, reduces the steps and expenses that were previously required, and provides more funding to individual applicants. The proposed changes will also include communications to improve residents' knowledge and understanding of the risks and hazards associated with basement flooding. This report presents findings and recommendations from the review and the results of internal and external stakeholder consultations.

The recommended changes to the Residential Protective Plumbing program and the associated by-law include:

- A new simplified application process;
- Elimination of the requirement for a closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection;
- Elimination of the requirement for current property taxes to be paid in full;
- Elimination of the requirement for a site visit;
- Introduction of a new rebate for primary or secondary sump pump with battery backup power in an existing sump pit, and construction of a sump pit where required; and,
- Increasing rebate amounts to better support the installation of protective plumbing devices.

The recommended changes to the Compassionate Grant program include:

- A new and simplified application process;
- Simplified eligibility criteria;
- Elimination of the requirement for current property taxes to be paid in full; and,
- A requirement for implementation of mitigation measures to be eligible for subsequent Compassionate Grant grants.

RÉSUMÉ

Nous déposons le *Règlement sur le Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout* afin de réviser le programme et le règlement municipal existants et de soumettre au Conseil municipal des recommandations pour étude. En outre, le personnel de la Ville sait qu'il faut procéder à un examen du Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle puisqu'il y a des corrélations entre ces deux programmes. Ce rapport comprend aussi des recommandations à étudier par le Conseil municipal pour le Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle.

Le programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout offre une aide financière aux propriétaires admissibles de la Ville d'Ottawa pour l'installation de dispositifs antirefoulement comme les pompes d'assèchement et les conduites secondaires d'égout pluvial et sanitaire afin d'éviter que les eaux d'égout ou les eaux pluviales entrent dans les habitations en passant par les raccords ou les conduites secondaires de service pendant un événement de surcharge des égouts.

Les modifications que le personnel de la Ville propose d'apporter au Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout et au règlement municipal correspondant visent à mieux faire connaître et à simplifier le traitement des demandes et à améliorer l'aide offerte aux résidents.

Dans le cadre du Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle, la Ville offre une subvention de 1 000 \$ aux résidents admissibles de la Ville d'Ottawa dont les habitations subissent des inondations récurrentes à cause de la surcharge des égouts. Les modifications que l'on propose d'apporter au Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle visent à accroître la participation, à simplifier le traitement des

demandes et à améliorer l'aide offerte aux résidents.

Le présent rapport et les recommandations qu'il comprend font également état des commentaires exprimés sur le Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout, qui précisent entre autres que le processus de traitement des demandes comporte trop de formulaires et d'étapes, ce qui permet difficilement de s'y retrouver, que l'inspection par télévision en circuit fermé (TVCF) allonge le processus et le rend plus cher et que le financement offert aux différents demandeurs était insuffisant.

Les mises à jour que l'on propose d'apporter au Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout et au règlement municipal correspondant simplifient le traitement des demandes, réduisent les étapes et les frais qu'il fallait y consacrer et permettent d'offrir un meilleur financement aux différents demandeurs. Les modifications proposées prévoient aussi des communiqués destinés à permettre aux résidents de mieux connaître et comprendre les risques et les dangers liés à l'inondation des sous-sols. Dans ce rapport, nous présentons les constatations et les recommandations issues de l'examen, ainsi que les résultats des consultations menées auprès des parties prenantes en interne et en externe.

Les modifications que l'on recommande d'apporter au Programme d'installation de dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires résidentiels pour la protection contre le refoulement d'égout et au règlement municipal correspondant portent sur :

- un nouveau processus simplifié pour le traitement des demandes;
- l'élimination de l'obligation de mener une inspection par télévision en circuit fermé (TVCF);
- l'élimination de l'obligation d'acquitter en entier les impôts fonciers exigibles;
- l'élimination de l'obligation de prévoir une visite des lieux;
- le lancement d'un nouveau remboursement pour les pompes d'assèchement principales ou secondaires avec batterie de secours dans un puisard existant et la construction d'un puisard dans les cas nécessaires;
- l'augmentation du montant des remboursements afin d'améliorer l'aide offerte dans l'installation des dispositifs protecteurs sanitaires.

Les modifications que l'on recommande d'apporter au Programme de subventions à titre d'aide exceptionnelle portent sur :

- un nouveau processus simplifié pour le traitement des demandes;
- des critères d'admission simplifiés;
- l'élimination de l'obligation d'acquitter en entier les impôts fonciers exigibles;
- l'obligation de mettre en œuvre des mesures d'atténuation des risques pour avoir droit aux subventions ultérieures à titre d'aide exceptionnelle.

BACKGROUND

The Residential Protective Plumbing By-law review is on the 2023-2026 Council approved By-law Review Workplan ([ACS-2023-EPS-PPD-0001](#)).

In part of the Residential Protective Plumbing program review, this report also responds to the Council approved [motion](#) from the October 25, 2023 Council Meeting on the City's response to flooding events and the Council approved [motion](#) from December 6, 2023 Council meeting to improve flood resiliency and preparedness for extreme weather events.

The Residential Protective Plumbing program was first launched in 2005 to provide eligible City of Ottawa homeowners with financial assistance for the installation of protective plumbing devices, such as sump pumps and storm and sanitary backwater valves that prevent sewage or stormwater from entering homes through service connections or laterals during a sewer surcharge event. While uptake of the program increases around significant flooding events, the program is, overall, being underutilized. Since 2016, approximately two-hundred and sixty (260) residents have applied to the program, requiring the use of \$350,000 of funding, however with the average program budget of \$175,000 over the next three (3) years, there is available funding to further encourage residents to participate in the program.

The current application process is a two-part process.

- Part one: Application is submitted to the City prior to the installation.
- Part two: Application is submitted post-installation.

The Part One Application provides pre-approval of the work. Following the approval of the Part One Application, Program applicants must hire a contractor to complete a

closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection of their home's storm or sanitary lateral and submit the results to the City for a condition assessment. Site Visit Reviews are completed by a consultant retained by the City to confirm the required protective plumbing work. After the Site Visit Review has been completed, the applicant submits a Building Permit application to the City, along with a copy of the approved Part One Application and the Site Visit Review report.

The Part Two Application includes the final documentation of the work that was completed to identify and request funding from the grant.

Compassionate Grant Program

The Compassionate Grant program provides \$1,000 in funding to eligible City of Ottawa homeowners and tenants affected by recurring flooding due to sewer surcharging. To qualify, a City of Ottawa homeowner or tenant must provide proof of three or more sewer surcharge events during a fifteen-year period; own or rent the property during all three events; experience at least \$1,000 in damage during the most recent event; have no outstanding balance on property taxes; and report sewer surcharging within four months of the event. The program was initially launched in 2010, with fifty-two (52) grant recipients since that time. As of August 2024, approximately \$148,000 in funds remains available, there has not been any budgetary requests for additional funding.

Similar to the Residential Protective Plumbing program, there is a need to increase participation, simplify the application process, and enhance support for residents.

DISCUSSION

Residential Protective Plumbing Program

Staff have completed a comprehensive review of the Residential Protective Plumbing (RPP) program and its associated by-law, which has included a review of the current program and participation rates, a municipal scan, and consultations with members of Council and residents. The review concluded that the current program had a few areas of opportunity to streamline the application process and increase the funds that are available to residents. What staff found was that roughly half of those that wanted to participate in the program opted not to when presented with the requirements for their participation. Staff also heard and found that the application process was too long and contained too many detailed questions; the closed-circuit television and consultant review did not add significant value to the process, while utilizing program funds; and, new granting options could provide more value to residents. Therefore, by updating the

current by-law, these concerns can be remediated.

Based on this review, the following Residential Protective Plumbing program updates are recommended and can be achieved within the current funding model:

1. New simplified application process

The application process will be simplified to one application submitted following the completion of the work, reducing the overall documentation requirements. The revised application form will contain a section for the applicant's information, the required documentation that must be submitted alongside the application (proof of ownership, copy of building permit, contractor's invoice, and copy of Building Code Services Inspection Report), and the rebates that the applicant is requesting.

2. Eliminate the requirement for a closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection

From 2019 to 2023, 91 percent of the closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspections that occurred, showed the sewer laterals were working as they should. Those investigations that did show some issues generally resulted in additional repairs or replacement requirements that can become quite cumbersome for residents. Given a closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspection is not a part of the industry standard when installing a back water valve, staff recommend that closed-circuit television (CCTV) inspections will no longer be required as part of the application process. This will benefit residents with less costs, save on scheduling and potential delays, and ultimately reduce the application requirements further.

3. Eliminate the requirement for current property taxes to be paid in full

Under the proposed change, the requirement for current property taxes will be removed ensuring the most vulnerable communities and families remain eligible.

4. Eliminate the requirement for a Site Visit Review

Currently, as part of the application process, Site Visit Reviews are completed by a consultant retained by the City to confirm the required protective plumbing work. The consultant site visit helps reduce the potential risk of future flooding by confirming that the proposed changes are appropriate and comprehensive.

A recent review of 30 Site Visit Reviews found only one instance where the Site Visit Review updated the work proposed by the contractor. Additionally, a third-party site review is not required as part of industry standards therefore, under the proposed change, staff recommend that a Site Visit Review will no longer be required as part of the application process.

Removing the Site Visit Review will reduce the Residential Protective Plumbing program requirements for applicants, reduce the overall processing time required for applications, and increase available funding to support the program.

5. New Rebate for Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power in an existing sump pit, and construction of a sump pit where required

A sump pit is a container installed below the basement floor designed to collect excess rain and groundwater conveyed by foundation drains or weeping tile. A sump pump is installed in the sump pit to pump the excess water from the sump pit through the discharge pipe to the storm sewer system or safely to the surface away from the home to help prevent basement flooding. A secondary sump pump acts as a backup pump supporting the primary sump pump should it fail or become overwhelmed by the volume of water; given the battery backup nature, they will also continue to operate in the event of a power outage during a rain event.

From April 2018 to March 2020, a City of Ottawa pilot program funded under the National Disaster Mitigation program offered a Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power to eligible City of Ottawa homeowners. The proposed pilot was approved as part of Council report [ACS2017-PWE-GEN-0036](#). The level of interest by residents exceeded the available funding for the pilot as sump pumps are critical to remove water away from a foundation and basement.

Therefore, given the initial level of interest in and benefits of the pilot, and the synergies with the Residential Protective Plumbing program, it is recommended that the proposed rebates be integrated into the program.

6. Increase Rebate Amounts to better support the installation of protective plumbing devices

Under the proposed change, the existing rebate amounts will be adjusted to better reflect the current costs of such works. Additionally, the rebate amount for

a Building Permit would be adjusted annually to reflect the cost of the permit. The City will rebate up to a maximum of each of the individual rebates available at the time of the submission of the application form. Should the cost of the work be less than the amount of the available rebate, the City shall rebate the lesser of the two amounts.

Table 1 – Current Rebates and Amounts (2016) and Proposed Rebates and Amounts (2024)

	Current or New Rebate	2016 Rebate Amount	Proposed Rebate Amount
1	Building Permit (Plumbing work only)	\$80	100% of the current permit fee
2	Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Inspection	\$100	N/A
3	Indoor Sanitary backwater valve	\$700	\$1,000
4	Indoor Storm backwater valve	\$500	\$1,000
5	Indoor Sanitary and Storm backwater valve	\$1,000	N/A
6	Exterior Storm backwater valve	\$1,750	\$2,500
7	NEW - Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power in an existing sump pit	N/A	\$1,500
8	NEW – Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power and construction of a sump pit	N/A	\$3,000

7. Establish an on-going Education and Communications Plan

An on-going Education and Communications Plan will be developed by Infrastructure and Water Services, in conjunction with Public Information and Media Relations (PIMR) and others.

The goal of the communications will be to increase Residential Protective Plumbing program awareness and participation, increase knowledge and understanding of maintenance requirements, and improve knowledge of the risks

and hazards associated with basement flooding events while ensuring homeowners are aware of their responsibilities to ensure proper maintenance.

Given the importance of protective plumbing measures as the climate changes, communications and outreach will align with other City programs that support climate resiliency including Rain Ready Ottawa (RRO) and the Better Homes Ottawa Loan Program (BHOLP). This may include the development of joint materials and joint participation at community outreach events.

The communications plan will also work with industry groups to continue to build industry buy-in and leverage their networks to drive program uptake.

Compassionate Grant Program (Grant)

In parallel with the Residential Protective Plumbing program review, staff have undertaken a comprehensive review of the Compassionate Grant program, as program participation was not at the level that staff would otherwise expect. The general feedback received about this program was that the eligibility criteria was too stringent making it challenging for residents to benefit from the program. Proposed changes to the criteria will improve the grants impact by providing support following a single flooding event rather than the current three-event requirement.

Currently to qualify, a homeowner or tenant must provide proof of residency or ownership during each flooding event, damage equal or greater than \$1,000, and documentation associated with reporting the three sewer surcharge events (dates, incident numbers, claims to the City, insurance provider or affidavits).

The following program updates are recommended:

1. New simplified application process

By reducing the criteria, the application process will be simplified reducing the overall documentation requirements.

2. Simplify eligibility criteria

For eligible City of Ottawa homeowners and tenants, the proposed change will reduce the criteria to one sewer surcharge event with \$1,000 in damages reported to the City within one month of the event.

Updating this requirement will increase eligibility and reduce the required steps residents must take to receive a grant. It may also reduce stress, support clean-up, and reduce the financial impact of the flooding event.

3. Eliminate the requirement for current property taxes

Currently, the Compassionate Grant Application includes a verification that “the status of the property tax account...confirm that the property is not in tax arrears for the purposes of determining eligibility for a compassionate grant”. However, this requirement restricts access to the Compassionate Grant, potentially limiting support to some residents.

Under the proposed change, the requirement for current property taxes will be removed.

4. Require mitigation measures to be eligible for subsequent grant(s)

Currently, there are no eligibility requirements to take action to prevent future flooding due to sewer surcharging.

To reduce the risk of future property damage, it is proposed that prior to the approval of any subsequent Compassionate Grant Applications, the homeowner/resident must undertake approved mitigation measures or participate in the Residential Protective Plumbing program to be re-eligible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds are available within existing budget authority. Future budget authority requirements will be brought forward through the annual budget process.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to Committee and Council approving the recommendations of this report.

CONSULTATION

Feedback on the proposed Residential Protective Plumbing program updates were received through internal and external stakeholder consultation. As part of the internal stakeholder consultation, members of Council and staff were invited to review and comment on the program updates, including the revised application and proposed by-

law changes. The review period ran July 23 through August 20, 2024.

The external stakeholder consultation was launched on the City's Engage Ottawa webpage, and included the proposed application, program updates, and by-law changes. The review period ran July 25 through September 6, 2024.

Additionally, in partnership with the Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability (CAFES), City staff presented the proposed changes to both programs at a public event on October 25, 2024, that included approximately 100 participants. This event provided an opportunity for residents to engage directly with City staff and ask questions during the breakout discussions.

The proposed changes were also informed by input received from resident members of Council related to a major rainfall event in August 2023. Findings from the consultations are provided on [Engage Ottawa](#).

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with the recommendations of this report.

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Mitigation of urban flooding often requires improvements on private property and municipal infrastructure. Direct support programs to residents, such as the Residential Protective Plumbing program, can be more effective, can be implemented quickly, and often are required even when municipal infrastructure upgrades are required. Therefore, enhancing the program to ensure it is more accessible to residents will have an overall positive impact to City infrastructure.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no new delegation of authority implications. From Schedule H, *Delegation of Authority* (By-law No. 2023-67), Section 8 - Grants and Rebates, "...the General Manager, Infrastructure and Water Services...[is] authorized to approve grants and rebates, and approve, amend, extend and execute appropriate agreements for...the Protective Plumbing Program...provided that such agreements:

1. are in accordance with applicable City policies approved by Council;
2. are within approved budget limits; and,
3. contain appropriate insurance, termination, and indemnification provisions.

The exercise of delegated authority pursuant to subsection (1) shall be reported to the appropriate Standing Committee at least one in each calendar year.”.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

The Residential Protective Plumbing (RPP) program supports the climate adaptation and resiliency goals of the Climate Change Master Plan by equipping residents with the knowledge and resources needed to prepare for extreme weather and protect their property from flooding. Residential Protective Plumbing addresses a top risk in the City’s Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment and supports the long-term objectives of the draft Climate Resiliency Strategy of building resilient communities and resilient buildings.

Climate change is projected to increase both the amount and intensity of rainfall (Climate Projections for the National Capital Region (2020)). This will bring increased risks of basement flooding as stormwater infrastructure is overwhelmed.

By increasing the number of households with protective plumbing installed, RPPP will contribute to Ottawa’s preparedness for changing climate conditions and help alleviate the negative impacts of flooding. Similarly, the Compassionate Grant program will provide continued support to residents impacted by flooding.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The Residential Protective Plumbing program and Compassionate Grant program are citywide programs, and they are open to all residents.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The proposed changes to the programs support the [2023-2026 Term of Council Priorities](#), Strategic Priority - “A city that is green and resilient”, specifically Strategic Objective 19: “Increase resiliency to extreme weather and changing climate conditions”

by improving the resiliency of the City’s infrastructure, and “Strengthening community capacity for climate preparedness...”.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1: Draft Residential Protective Plumbing By-law

DISPOSITION

Infrastructure and Water Services, in conjunction with any other relevant Departments, will implement Council directions emanating from this report, as appropriate.