



Date: May 5, 2025
To: Mayor and Council
Author: Administration
RE: Greenhouse Sanitary Sewer By-law

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. That Council **approve** By-law 28-2025, being A By-law to regulate the connection and discharge into Kingsville Sanitary Sewer System by Greenhouses and Greenhouse Premises;
2. That Council **approve** the fees and rates identified in this report to cover current and future expenses associated with monitoring and treating discharge from Greenhouses and Greenhouse Premises connected to the Town's Sanitary Sewer System; and,
3. That corresponding By-law 34-2025, being a By-law to amend the Town's Water and Sewer Rate By-law 90-2024, **be adopted** during the By-law stage of this Council Agenda.

BACKGROUND

In August 2023, our region experienced a significant storm event that brought extreme rainfall. During this storm, many residents reported that sanitary effluent was flooding basements in Ruthven.

In response to these issues, investigations were conducted, which revealed baseline sanitary sewer flows were much higher than anticipated due to the twenty-two greenhouse operations connected into wastewater collections system.

As a result, Council directed administration to:

Prepare a By-law establishing a compliance and inspection program for private greenhouse wastewater systems connected to public infrastructure, inclusive of an appropriate fee schedule and fines for non-compliance.

DISCUSSION

Municipalities that own and operate wastewater infrastructure establish Sewer-use By-laws to regulate discharges into these systems. The regulations within these By-laws are crucial for protecting public health, preserving the environment, preventing damage to private property, and ensuring that buried infrastructure functions as designed.

Most by-laws include regulations to manage the quality and quantity of waste discharged into sewers. In addition to standard regulations, many By-laws set industry-specific limits to control complex waste or large volumes of discharge. For example, businesses that prepare or serve food, vehicle service stations, mechanical repair shops, dental practices, and other commercial operations that produce unique types of waste are often subject to specific discharge provisions related to their operations.

Kingsville is distinct due to its high concentration of greenhouse facilities, which play a vital role in the local economy. These greenhouses generate employment opportunities for many residents and provide food for numerous Canadians. To support this industry, the town has permitted greenhouses located near sanitary sewers to connect, provided they meet specific conditions. However, flow monitoring has revealed instances where these conditions are not being met. As a result, Administration believes it is necessary to regulate these connections, similar to other industries, by creating a specific sewer-use bylaw for the greenhouse sector.

This By-law (attached) will include permitting requirements for Greenhouse Premises connected to the sanitary sewer. The By-law and permitting requirements includes the following:

- 1) Discharge Regulations - limits on the quantity, quality, and frequency of discharges permitted into the sanitary sewers.
- 2) Flow Monitoring - requirements for the installation of remote flow monitor devices to ensure compliance with the permit.
- 3) Fines and Penalties - a schedule of enforceable fines and penalties for non-compliance with the by-law and the associated permits.
- 4) Disconnection - instances of non-compliance will result in disconnection from the sanitary sewer system.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are significant cost implications associated with implementing a flow metering and monitoring program. To ensure full cost recovery of this program, Administration is recommending the following rates;

- 1) Permit Fees – applicable to all existing and future greenhouse sewer connections. These are one-time fees, as amended by Council from time to time.
 - \$15,000 (2" connection)
 - \$22,500 (3" connection)
 - \$30,000 (4" connection)

These fees will fund the start-up costs associated with the new sewage metering and flow monitoring program. It will also provide for temporary project management services to ensure a successful and expedient program roll-out.

Permits will be valid for five years. Renewal fees will be \$500 per five year term or as amended by Council from time to time.

- 2) A Fixed Quarterly Connection charge – applicable to all greenhouse sewage connections.
 - \$2,600 / Quarter (2" connection)
 - \$3,900 / Quarter (3" connection)
 - \$5,200 / Quarter (4" connection)

These fees will offset the annual operating costs of monitoring flows, discharge sampling, plus one additional full-time staff (ex. Engineering Technician) dedicated to ensuring ongoing compliance with the Sewage Use By-law.

- 3) An increase to the Metered Sewage Discharge rate from \$1.87 to \$3.07 per cubic meter.

This increase will fund a portion of the additional chemical and biosolids removal costs identified by OCWA in their most recent Operations and Maintenance contract proposal. OCWA has cited increased volumes and phosphate levels produced by the greenhouse industry as a significant contributor to these rising treatment expenses.

- 4) As the Town collects further data on discharge flows and quality, Administration will likely recommend additional rate premiums for greenhouses with high phosphate discharge levels through future fee by-law amendments.

The fees noted above are expected to provide for the full-cost recovery of the flow metering and monitoring program, as well as increases to operational treatment costs associated with the greenhouse industry. These rates will not address the capital costs required to address long-term capacity improvements to the conveyance and treatment system. A financial strategy for these costs will be provided to Council once an appropriate engineering solution, with costing estimates, has been determined.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sewer-use By-laws are essential for protecting the environment and ensuring the responsible management of wastewater resources. By regulating what can be

discharged into the sewer system, these By-laws help prevent pollutants and contaminants from entering bodies of water, which in turn improves the quality of lakes, rivers, and groundwater. They establish standards for acceptable discharges, enhancing the performance of wastewater treatment plants and reducing operational stress, resulting in better treatment outcomes. Additionally, these By-laws promote sustainable practices among local businesses and protect public health by minimizing the risk of waterborne diseases and contamination.

CONSULTATIONS

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