

# Erin councillor doesn't want residents to pay sewage user fees

*Angelica Babiera*

'We're still looking for additional funding, so at the end of the day, none of our residents have to pay a single cent for the wastewater system,' said Coun. Rob Smith

ERIN – An Erin councillor is calling for assurances property owners won't be paying user fees for the new wastewater treatment plant.

Coun. Rob Smith put his notice of motion on removing the proposed user fees for the wastewater treatment system at last week's council meeting.

"I put the notice of motion in because I have spoken to many residents about the wastewater treatment plant and they have informed me their number one worry, which is paying for the sewage pipe running through their property," said Smith in an interview.

"If I were them, I would complain too because everything else is going up, just go fill up your tank with gas and you would feel the burden of inflation right now. Some people are filling up their tanks and it's costing them \$120 or \$150, and I feel this kind of inflation too. Groceries are expensive and so are cars, electronics, and everything else. Worrying about another expense when everything else is already expensive should not be something our residents have to worry about."

The proposed sewage system will be available only within the urban boundary which includes approximately 4,500 residents. Rural residents will not be financially contributing to the construction of the project.

If the town does not get additional funding for the wastewater system, then property owners within the urban boundary of Erin and Hillsburgh will need to pay for the sewage pipe running through their property.

In addition, any costs related to construction and connection to the pipes as well as the decommissioning of their current septic tanks must be paid by the property owner as well.

The average capital cost of the construction of the pipes that will run through the road and associated repair work to the road will be around \$15,000 to \$18,000. The approximate cost of connecting the home to those pipes is around \$4,000 to \$8,000.

The town recently attained a \$3.6 million funding grant from the Ministry of Infrastructure for the wastewater treatment system. This funding will be used for pipelines that will connect existing properties within the urban boundary to the treatment plant as well as local infrastructure such as road repairs.

According to Smith, the town is still actively looking for additional funding, so urban boundary property owners will not have to pay for anything with regards to the system.

"We're still looking for additional funding, so at the end of the day, none of our residents have to pay a single cent for the wastewater system," said Smith.

"I'm also trying to work out with staff to see how the town can afford paying for the sewage pipelines if we can't find additional funding. I'm in office to advocate for our people, so we have to do everything we can to help them with this."

North America Construction Ltd. was officially selected as the contractor for Erin's wastewater treatment plant for \$114 million.

On April 28, Erin council broke ground at the site of the town's new wastewater facility just southeast of the Village of Erin. Construction has begun and will take two years to complete.

Council will deliberate Smith's notice of motion at a later council meeting.

Meanwhile, the town will also be hosting a [public information session](#) on the wastewater system on May 24 for Hillsburgh residents from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m., and on May 25 for Erin residents from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m.