

Town of Erin seeks provincial and federal funding for wastewater treatment plant

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News

Plant and associated pipes will not be completed until late 2024

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Existing homes in Erin's urban area and new developments will have to connect to the wastewater treatment plant. Rural residents will not.

But despite being required to connect to it, residents will immediately be on the hook for connection charges.

On May 26, Councillor Rob Smith presented a notice of motion at a meeting, calling for council to take a formal position that property owners in the existing urban areas not be required to connect to the wastewater treatment plant until a significant estimated total of indirect costs is secured from higher orders of government. Council voted in favour unanimously.

"There seems to be a thought that everybody needs to pay into the system as soon as the wastewater

treatment plant is built," said Smith. "That is not the case. When it runs past your house, you will be required to hook up. As part of the subdivision agreements we have, the developers are paying for the trunk lines. That is what nobody can get away with."

Smith would like the town to use surplus contributions they have from developers. He is not comfortable with the town increasing their debt level because of inflation and uncertainties.

Mayor Allan Aills clarified the project would not move forward without grant funding from the provincial or federal governments.

Contingent on receiving grants to make the project affordable, some urban residents will connect to it around 2025, others will do so in the years after that. If the town receives a substantial grant, staff could propose a faster timeline, given the costs are mostly covered. If not, staff could stretch the timeline out to make it affordable.

"This would mean some properties might not connect until 2035," said Aills. "Since the plant is under construction, it is important for everyone to understand this is a lengthy process. Property owners will not receive a knock on the door tomorrow from a government official demanding they hook up or forcing them into paying some new tax or bill."

He confirmed timelines, stating that the plant will not be complete until about November to December 2024.

"Only until the plant is working in two-and-a-half years, and after the new subdivisions are connected to the plant, will we then start to systematically connect existing homes to the facility," said Aills.

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Aills said he is an advocate for the plant because of the effects of septic systems on the environment. He said they are facing a climate crisis of global proportion.

"Here at home, we have been allowing the pollution of our groundwater and aquifer in local streets, because virtually every property in town has septic tanks," said Aills. "In fact, I have been met with disbelief at Queen's Park when I told the premier and numerous cabinet ministers our entire urban area, all those lovely businesses on Main Street, are on septic systems or holding tanks."

The systems continue to age, leak and deteriorate. They will need to be replaced as they pose an environmental hazard. They're also costly.