

OWU By-law Review Frequently Asked Questions

What are the watering restrictions for John McCrae House?

Gardens and turf at John McCrae house are watered using automated sprinklers in accordance with terms of the Outside Water Use By-law. During program Level 2 Red requirements, turf watering is halted with gardens at McCrae House by hand watering.

Does the by-law restrict residents from washing the new waste carts?

Washing of waste carts is permitted if the hose is equipped with a shut-off valve at the discharge end of the hose. Water is not being permitted to onto a paved surface, including driveways, pathways, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, or roadways.

How does the by-law affect Horticultural Therapy Programs that use gardens for groups and single clients with various disabilities?

In program levels 0 and 1 watering of all trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens may be watered at any time. In Level 2 Red watering of all trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens must occur on alternate days based on the address of the location you are watering (odd-numbered addresses are permitted to water plants on odd-numbered days and those with even-numbered addresses on even-numbered days) and between 7 and 9 a.m. and 7 and 9 p.m. This by-law applies in the same manner to all residents, businesses and groups that use water within the City of Guelph, so as long as you are using municipal water outside within the allotted times that is fine.

What type of enforcement is there?

The program is actively enforced during program levels 1 and 2 by the City's By-law Enforcement Officers. By-law officers will issue a \$130 ticket or court summons per program non-compliance event observed, especially in program levels 1 Yellow and 2 Red. The program is also enforced in the Blue level but the City is especially committed to education at this level.

What is the provincial governments' involvement in the Outdoor Water Use Program?

The Grand River Low Water Response team is made out of representatives from Grand River Conservation Authority, municipalities, industry, local business, agriculture, golf courses and others. This group meets regularly to discuss the conditions and enact the restrictions should low water conditions be present in the watershed, as defined by the Ontario Low Water Response Plan. Should watershed low water conditions worsen beyond Level 2, the Ontario Water Directors Committee (ODWC) will evaluate conditions and make a decision to declare Level 3 based on the recommendations of the local water response team. Prior to a Level 3 declaration the OWDC Low Water Committee must ensure that conservation efforts have been documented, there has been significant impacts on the watershed and all social, environmental and economic impacts from further restrictions have been documented and described.

Where can customers find additional program information, including the current program level?

Additional information on the current program level and other requirements is provided to residents on an ongoing basis throughout the spring and summer months through the following means:

- Local newspapers – Guelph Tribune
- On our website guelph.ca/water

- By calling the Outside Water Use line at 519-822-1260 x 2153
- By email at waterservices@guelph.ca
- Subscribing to the City's Facebook or Twitter social media feeds
- Local radio CJOY 1460 and Magic FM 106.1
- Road signs located around the city ([for a map, click here](#))
- Information pamphlets have also been made available at many City buildings, including libraries and recreation centres.

I need to stain my deck/re-seal my driveway/paint my house but I need to wash the surface first. Can I use a power-washer to do that?

Yes, this is an activity that is exempt from the program. All we ask is that you do it efficiently and use a shut-off nozzle on your hose (power-washer). However, if you simply intend to clean loose debris your deck or driveway please conserve water by dry sweeping rather than using flowing water to do the job.

Why is the City allowing residential growth if there is not sufficient water available for existing customers?

Even with community growth there remains sufficient water supply available to meet the ongoing demands of both new and existing residents. In fact, since 2006 Guelph's water average daily water production has decreased by 12 per cent while population has grown by about 9 per cent through the same period. This is a result of the Guelph community's success in conserving water through initiatives such as the Outside Water Use Program.

Historically, the requirement for the City to implement outdoor water use restrictions has been driven by demand reductions as defined through the Ontario Low Water Response Plan (OLWRP). The OLWRP monitors conditions in throughout the local watershed and calls for reductions in water takings from the City and other private permit to take water holders should set thresholds be met for reduced river flows, precipitation and other environmental indicators during periods of seasonal drought. For more information on the Ontario Low Water Response Plan please visit the [Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website](#).

Can I use my automated irrigation/sprinkler system to water my lawn?

Yes, you can use an automated irrigation/sprinkler system to water your lawn but system operation must comply with the water restrictions of the Outside Water Use [Program level](#) which is in place.

If you are using an automated irrigation/sprinkler system it is highly recommended that the system be equipped with a smart controller and a rain sensor or soil moisture sensor to ensure the most efficient application of water through irrigation.

Can I use a hose or sprinkler to water my gardens, or do I have to use a watering can?

There are no restrictions on how residents water their gardens. However, to maintain compliance during Level 2 Red, residents must water gardens within the permitted watering times, as well as with a watering can or hose with a watering wand possessing shut-off valve to reduce water waste.

Is Guelph the only community with an Outside Water Use Program and temporary seasonal restrictions in place?

No. Guelph's program is similar to the programs offered by many of our neighbouring municipalities. Like us, the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Brantford, and the townships of Guelph/Eramosa, Centre-Wellington, North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich all have outside water use programs in place to regulate non-essential use in times of drought and environmental stress. Like Guelph, other communities have to comply with the requirements of the Province's Low Water Response Plan, which was developed to help Ontario manage problems associated with drought.

How much water is enough for my lawn to maintain a healthy and vital appearance?

Lawns typically need 1 inch (2.5 cm) of water per week. Set an empty container or rain gauge near the sprinkler to measure the amount of water used. Stop watering when the container is one inch full.

It is recommended that lawn watering be completed slowly, deeply and less often, to encourage deeper, more vigorous root growth. Always soak the soil thoroughly. A light sprinkling can often do more harm than no water at all. By watering less frequently you encourage the plant roots to search down for water, and they become stronger and better able to handle drought conditions.

Do commercial properties have the same water restrictions?

The Outside Water Use By-law applies to all properties located in the City of Guelph serviced via the municipal water supply.

Why are local golf courses allowed to water their grass while residents are not?

Local golf courses possess individual provincial permits to take water for irrigation purposes, with water used sourced from local rivers or private wells. These sources are independent of the municipal water system and as such exempt from the requirements of the City's Outside Water Use By-law. Individual Permits to Take Water are issued by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and also possess requirements for permit to take water holders to reduce water use during times of drought or environmental stress in accordance with the Ontario Low Water Response Plan. For questions or concerns regarding individual permits to take water and associated requirements please contact the Ontario Ministry of the Environment Public Information Centre at 416-325-4000 or picemail.moe@ontario.ca.

Why is Nestle able to take water from the aquifer while residents of Guelph are being asked to conserve?

Nestle Waters Canada and other industries outside of the City of Guelph urban boundary possess private wells and individual Permits to Take Water for business purposes. These sources are independent of the municipal water system and as such exempt from the requirements of the Outside Water Use By-law. Individual Permits to Take Water are issued by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and possess requirements for Permit to Take Water holders to reduce water use during times of drought or environmental stress in accordance with the Ontario Low Water Response Plan. For questions regarding individual permits to take water and associated requirements please contact the Ontario Ministry of the Environment Public Information Centre at 416-325-4000 or picemail.moe@ontario.ca.

What is the City doing to ensure there is enough water available to all users?

The City is seeking new sources of water and building additional water storage reservoirs over the next few years. These activities will help meet the needs of new growth and provide some capacity for outside water use. However, building additional storage is very expensive and will lead to increases in the cost of water. Customers can help reduce costs through efficient outside water use during hot, dry summer months.

The City is also involved in other initiatives to decrease water demand and increase water supply:

- The water efficiency program aims to reduce 2006 daily water takings by 20 per cent (10.6 million litres of water per day) by 2025.
- A program to optimize the capacity of existing City wells is ongoing.
- A water exploration program at the Arkell Springs well field is underway.
- The City has a proactive leak reduction program