



City of Guelph – Outside Water Use By-law Review

Phase 1 Engagement Summary

Prepared by Lura Consulting for the City of Guelph

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This Summary Report was prepared by Lura Consulting. Lura is providing third-party facilitation and reporting services as part of the Outside Water Use By-law Review. This report summarizes the feedback received during the Phase 1 of the Water Use By-law Review (January to February 2013) as well as some input received prior to the launch of the review in January 2013. If you have any questions or comments regarding the report, please contact:

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Appendix A: Community Forum and Business Roundtable Summaries

1 Background and Introduction

Guelph is a community that depends on groundwater to meet its drinking water needs. Typically, water demands increase during the summer months as people use more water for activities like washing the car, watering gardens and lawns, and filling swimming pools. In 2003, City Council approved an Outside Water Use By-law to help manage periods of low water supply and high water use. The by-law was also a necessary step for the City to meet Provincial requirements for water management outlined in Ontario's Low Water Response Plan.

Today, Guelph's Outside Water Use Program (OWUP)—which includes the by-law noted above—is one of the most successful and recognized water conservation programs in Ontario. It outlines the steps that residents and businesses need to take during drought conditions to help protect our water supply, the natural environment and ensure we all have access to the water we need.

The Outside Water Use By-law and OWUP have been in place in Guelph for nearly 10 years. During prolonged periods of drought in 2012, the City of Guelph implemented enhanced water use restrictions under the by-law to ensure there was enough water to support both the needs of the City and the local environment.

In response to recent concerns about the by-law and to ensure the City is meeting its water needs in the best way possible, the Water Services Department has initiated a review of the Outside Water Use By-law and Program.

The review is exploring aspects of the Outside Water Use By-law and OWUP that are working well, and examining opportunities for refinements to the by-law and program that could help the City better manage its water resources into the future. The review is comprised of a 3 phase process aimed at engaging residents and stakeholders in an interactive dialogue on the status and effectiveness of the by-law and program, as well as regarding potential changes to the program and regulation moving forward:

- Phase 1: Issues and Opportunities (January - February 2013)
- Phase 2: Future Directions (April - May 2013)
- Phase 3: Confirming the Results (June – September 2013)

Section 3 of this report summarizes the community feedback received during Phase 1 of the engagement process. In addition, Section 2 below summarizes stakeholder input received prior to the launch of the review in January 2013.

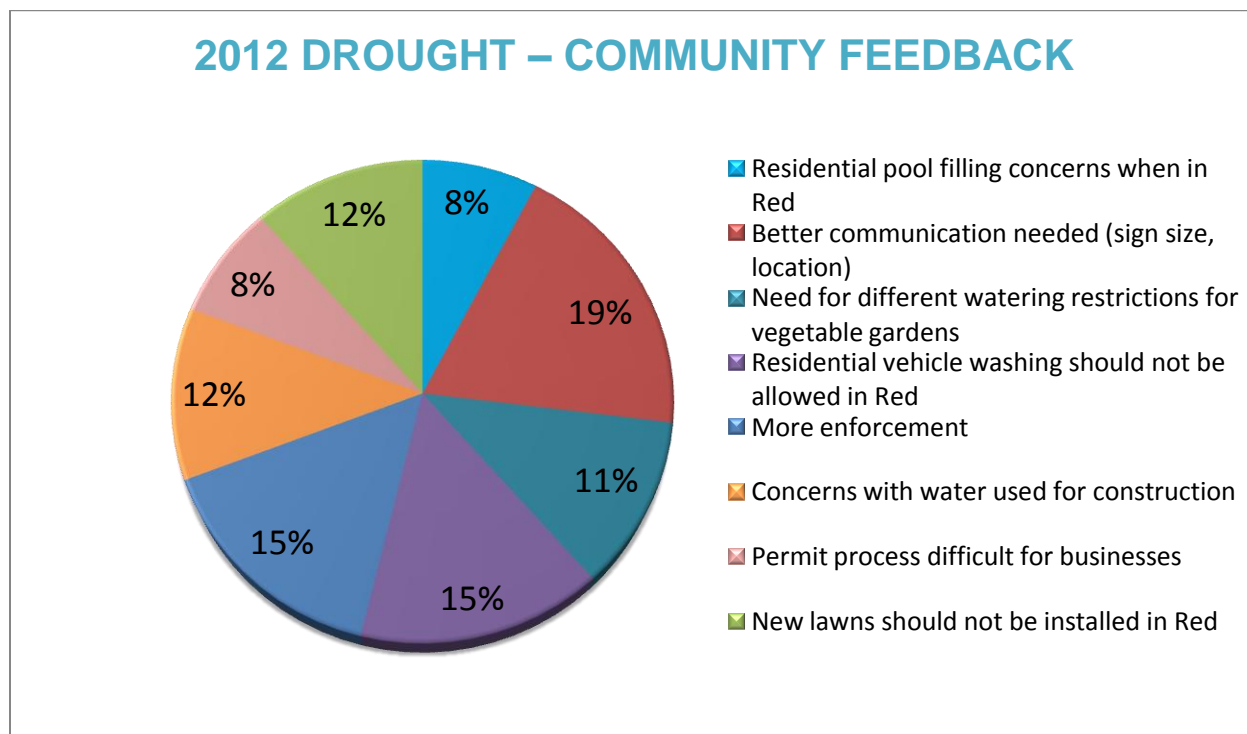
2 Summary of Stakeholder Input Prior to Review

In 2012, prior to the formal launch of the Outside Water Use By-law Review, the City of Guelph received a number of emails and calls from the public on the by-law and program. Below is a summary of the key themes from that input:

- Appropriateness of existing restrictions
 - Car washing
 - Food garden watering
 - Pool/hot tub filling and top ups
- Appropriateness of City facility/operations exemptions

- Sports field watering and facility use
- Need for enhanced communication approaches and awareness
- Need to define explicit guidelines for business (bulk water use)
- Growth and water restrictions rationale
- Enforcement approach to non-compliance

The chart below provides a more detailed breakdown of the community feedback received in 2012.



In addition, the City of Guelph's Water Conservation and Efficiency **Public Advisory Committee (PAC)** met twice in May 2012 to discuss the by-law and OWUP. In those meetings, the PAC identified aspects of the by-law and program that are working well, as well as opportunities for improvement and program enhancements. Below is a summary of feedback from the PAC in 2012, prior to the launch of the review in January 2013:

What is Working Well

- Awareness of citizens – 95% public awareness/recognition rate (2010)
- Healthy Landscapes program
 - Aim of program to provide water conservation and plants in a way that is more water conscious
 - Creates awareness
- Rain barrels – availability and proper use of rain barrels

Areas for Improvement

- Rain Barrels

- Prompt and continuous encouragement to enlist ongoing action “peer pressure”
- Education
 - Opportunities for better water use
 - Gravity fed watering systems
 - Solar power pumps
 - Multiple rain barrels
 - Commercial use
- Make desired plants more accessible (i.e. seed giveaways)
- Incentives to participate in Healthy Landscapes Program
- More demonstration sites that show where water conscious plants could be used (i.e. fusion landscapes)
- New restrictions/restricted use under the Outside Water Use Program
 - Have an automated system where there are always restrictions
 - Move to 4 level format (blue, yellow, orange, red)
 - Level Blue in winter
- Automatically move to Yellow in May (Yellow is cautious use)
- Move to Orange if conditions worsen
- Implement a higher level in advance of known inherent demand (i.e. long weekends in the summer)
- Education on purpose of lawn
 - Mandating irrigation from non potable sources to water lawns - new devices
- Audit irrigation systems (efficiencies and standards needed)
 - Requirements for meter on irrigation system
 - Mandating standards for contractors services
- Enhanced Outside Water Use Program education
 - Making people understand that our water is groundwater, water is a commodity and it needs to be sustainable
- Proactive education on pools
 - Pool efficiencies
 - Pool covers as a way to ways to decrease water evaporation
 - Rate structure as a way to control water use
- Outdoor water use rate structures
 - Technologies to differentiate between base use and peak use (metering)
 - Need to factor in subtleties (low income, month based rate, precipitation level)
- Research home consumption in sample of homes to assess impact of structures (water quantity patten analysis)
- Enhanced monitoring of/for non-compliance – hardscape watering
 - Mandatory downspout disconnections for homeowners

Opportunities for Program Enhancements

- Street signs – permanent LCD display boards throughout the City
- Hydro bill inserts to create awareness of the level and program
- Using businesses to push message/as an educational tool for their customers
- Newspaper editorials/articles
- Free seeds/plants
- Radio Ads

- Signs in the showers at public facilities (i.e. West End Recreational Center) and public promotions in unconventional spots
- Youth focus groups – define knowledge and need
- Rainwater harvesting system – make more accessible/affordable to homeowners
- Promote non-potable water for all irrigation purposes
- Reduce irrigation areas
- City should define statement for priorities for water use to direct decision making. This priority listing could include a water use hierarchy such as:
 - Drinking
 - Food provisions
 - Personal hygiene
 - Industrial –where require potable water
- Purple pipe systems

3 Summary of Phase 1 Engagement (January – February 2013)

3.1 Overview of Engagement Process

Phase 1 of the engagement process focused on informing residents and stakeholders about the current by-law and OWUP and obtaining feedback on issues and opportunities.

Key engagement activities in Phase 1 included two community forums, a business roundtable and online engagement via the program website – www.guelph.ca/owureview.

A Discussion Guide containing background information about the review process was developed for the face-to-face meetings and online engagement process. Three discussion questions were included in the Guide to help focus feedback during Phase 1:

1. What aspects of the Outside Water Use Program and By-law are working well now and should be kept to help residents, businesses, and the City to do their part to manage Guelph's water supply?
2. What changes to the Outside Water Use Program and By-law would help our community meet our water needs while also helping to manage Guelph's water supply in a responsible manner
3. Do you have additional feedback or ideas that we should consider?

3.2 Community Forums and Business Roundtable

During Phase 1, two community forums and a business roundtable were held on January 30th and February 5th 2013 to engage residents and business stakeholders in an interactive dialogue about the Outdoor Water Use By-Law and Program. A summary of feedback from these face-to-face meetings is provided below:

a) What aspects of the Outside Water Use Program and By-law are working well now and should be kept to help residents, businesses, and the City to do their part to manage Guelph's water supply?

- The 3 level system
- Communication of the irrigation aspects of the program
- The vehicle washing restrictions
- Allowing residents to continue watering their gardens under level 1

b) What changes to the Outside Water Use Program and By-law would help our community meet our water needs while also helping to manage Guelph's water supply in a responsible manner?

- Don't allow any vehicle washing under program level 2 (red)
- Increase fines for residents who do not follow the by-law
- Include additional restrictions for the car wash industry (i.e. automated car washes and do-it-yourself car washes)
- Add another level after level 2 (red) but before level black that restricts water use for pools
- Adjust the morning watering timeframe from 7am-9am to 6am-8am to limit the amount of sunlight on lawns during the watering period
- Improve resident understanding/awareness of the by-law and its requirements
- Move to a zone system (similar to the zones used by the Guelph Waste Management Department) for implementing water use restrictions

c) Do you have additional feedback or ideas that we should consider?

- The City should encourage the use of water storage systems (e.g. cisterns) with more capacity than rain barrels
- Residents who have installed or want to install grey water systems should be given incentives/discounts
- Prohibit emptying of pool water into storm sewers
- Make alternate sources of water (lower grade than municipal water) available for filling pools
- Pool owners should be encouraged to re-use/retain pool water on their properties rather than emptying into storm sewers
- Each municipality has to look carefully at the triggers for the various program levels, including emergency response in the case of drought or extreme low water conditions
- The City should aggressively pursue well-field expansion to secure additional water supplies and lessen the need for restrictions
- The current water rate system does not distinguish between water use and wastewater
- The City should provide the public with information on how much water is used for what activity – this will help ensure more informed feedback during the next phase of the review
- The City should display its weather data and modeling information to illustrate expected precipitation and water supply availability
- The City should encourage the use of smart controllers to help control water usage
- The City should encourage the use of main shutoff valves
- Having more than one bulk water storage facility in Guelph, would be beneficial for businesses
- The City should audit homes and commercial irrigation systems to ensure they have well maintained and functioning systems and are conserving water

More detailed summaries of the community forums and business roundtable are included in Appendix A.

3.3 Online Engagement

Community members were invited to learn about the Water Use By-law and Program on the project website and provide input by filling out an online survey, or sending an email to owureview@guelph.ca or by phone. In total 3 online surveys were submitted, 20 comments were received by email and 3 by phone.

Below is a summary of the feedback received from online sources and phone, organized by theme and the 3 discussion questions used at the community forums. An asterisk [*] has been used to indicate the number of additional times a comment was made.

a) What aspects of the Outside Water Use Program and By-law are working well now and should be kept to help residents, businesses, and the City to do their part to manage Guelph's water supply?

- The different levels are increasingly restrictive – making them easy to understand*
- The newspapers ads, large street signs and web page – get the message out well*
- The restrictions encourage citizens to think of ways to conserve water
- The restrictions still allow water use for what is necessary
- Continue to allow residents to water their gardens/vegetables

b) What changes to the Outside Water Use Program and By-law would help our community meet our water needs while also helping to manage Guelph's water supply in a responsible manner?

Exemptions

- Allow watering for food growing gardens**
- Allow watering for flower gardens – they are important to people**
- Allow watering for new trees
- Exempt certain historical properties from OWUP regulations, such as the McCrae House
- Allow residents to clean their garbage bins with garden hoses even on restricted days

Lawn Watering

- Change restricted watering hours to
 - later in the evening**
 - earlier in the morning**
 - even hours
- Change watering days to the household's garbage day and a Saturday or Sunday
- Change even and odd day approach – unfair to some households (i.e. when month ends in odd day)
- Allow some watering for lawns throughout the drought periods in order to keep them alive*
- Increase restrictions on lawn watering – lawns will go dormant and then rebound
- Include a statement like “must have shut-off nozzle on your hose” to the plant and garden note, and make it clear that water pails are preferable
- During level 2, encourage people to water once a week

Vehicle Washing

- Don't allow car washing when other activities are restricted – it's not necessary **

- Remove restrictions on vehicle washing – currently too restrictive*
- For Level 0, urge people to wash cars only for special occasions/events
- For Level 1 and 2, restrict car washing to certain times of the day and urge people to wash cars only for special occasions/events; for level three, further reduce the time allowed for car washing
- Restrict the number of hours industries are allowed to wash cars during water restrictions

Pools

- Remove the restrictions related to pool covers
- Limit recreational sprinkler and pool top ups to certain times of the day (different from sprinkler use times)
- Don't allow people to fill their pools during water restrictions

Enforcement

- Have By-law Officers make note of unusually green lawns (homes and businesses) and check if in-ground sprinklers are being used when ban is on
- Increase the fine for private companies and residents who run sprinklers during water shortages

Water Response Levels

- Increase the degree of restrictions from Blue to Yellow – they are too similar*
- Change Water Response Levels to 0, 1 and 2 – to minimize confusion
- Change the colour yellow to orange – to express caution
- Use the blue rating as 'our standard' and have it reflect the community's sustainable and responsible approach to water use

Other Restrictions

- Include restrictions that apply to private wells, bulk water users, and industries
- Include restrictions for automated sprinkler systems on commercial properties

Communications

- Improve communication of restrictions by a) placing a note in the water bill to check the website for water restriction information b) a special mailing when we go to the highest level of restrictions c) large posters in all the grocery stores, beer stores, liquor stores
- Improve communication with residents who are affected by restrictions on irrigation, pools and hot tubs

Alternatives to the By-law

- Use monthly overall water use caps instead of the outdoor by-law; don't differentiate between indoor and outdoor use – leave it up to the individual

c) **Do you have additional feedback or ideas that we should consider?**

General Comments

- Development and growth should be considered in the context of water shortages*

- Changes to the Water Use By-law and Program shouldn't be made because of a few complaints
- The City should encourage sustainable water use all 12 months of the year
- Most residents were more than cooperative with water use restrictions
- The City should demonstrate best practices on its own properties

Water Conservation and Efficiency

- City owned buildings should demonstrate water conservation by capturing rainwater
- The City should encourage and incentivize residents and businesses to implement water efficiency measures such as:
 - Drought resistant native plantings
 - Low flush toilets (rebates)
 - Rain barrels
 - Water efficient landscaping on commercial properties
 - Grey water recycling systems
 - Use of non-potable water for watering sports fields/boulevards
 - Use of pool and hot tub covers

Negative Impacts of Water Restrictions

- Restrictions on lawn watering reduce property values which is unfair to taxpayers*
- The lack of consistent water supply may be discouraging industries and residents to locate here*
- Water restrictions are negatively affecting the City's appearance

Education and Awareness

- More awareness about our ecosystem and risks and costs associated with watering is needed*
- Water restriction signs need to be taken down promptly if it rains – otherwise people won't take them seriously

Industry

- Nestle should not be exempt from water restrictions in times of drought*
- Nestle should have to reduce the amount of water it uses during a water shortage*
- Water bottling does not seem wise considering the water shortages the City is facing

Violations

- There are a lot of violations, especially during the full water restrictions, including use of water sprinkler systems at establishments, institutions, banks, all the agricultural buildings*

Trees

- Homeowners and businesses should take responsibility for watering new City trees
- The City should discourage laying sod from mid June to September to reduce need for watering and special permits

- Residents should be educated on tree maintenance and encourage more tree planting to increase shade and reduce watering needs

Agriculture

- Consider bringing water in on trucks or trains for agricultural purposes to reduce water demand
- Too much farmland is increasing our water use

4 Next Steps

Based on the input collected as part of the Phase 1 engagement process, the City of Guelph Water Services Division will propose options for potential enhancements to Outside Water Use By-law and Program. Further consultation with stakeholders and the public will be conducted in Phase 2 to discuss proposed changes to the by-law and program and obtain feedback.

Appendix A: Community Forum and Business Roundtable Summaries

Outside Water Use By-Law Review

Community Forum #1 – Meeting Summary

January 30, 2013
6:30pm-9:00pm
Evergreen Seniors Centre

Number of Participants: 8

Discussion Summary

Questions Raised by Participants

- Why are there no restrictions on residential pools that use City water?
- Does the By-law restrict residents from emptying their pools?
- Would the City be able to provide a lower grade of water to use in pools?
- Is it possible for the City to provide discounts/incentives to residents who have installed or want to install water storage systems?

Participant Feedback on the Outside Water Use Policy and By-Law

- Water Storage – The City should encourage the use of water storage systems (e.g. cisterns) with more capacity than rain barrels for rainwater harvesting.
- Grey Water Systems – The City should provide incentives and discounts to residents who have installed or want to install grey water systems.
- Pool Water – The City should consider potential restrictions and options for the use of City water for pools. For example: emptying of pool water into storm sewers could be prohibited; alternate sources of water (lower grade than municipal water) could be made available for filling pools; pool owners could be encouraged to re-use/retain pool water on their properties rather than emptying into storm sewers.
- Vehicle Washing – The City should consider not allowing any washing under program level 2 (red).
- Enforcement – Residents who do not follow the Outdoor Water Use By-law should face higher fines.
- “Triggers” for Program Levels – GRCA is working with watershed municipalities on the low water response program. Each municipality has to look carefully at the triggers for the various program levels, including emergency response in the case of drought or extreme low water conditions.

Other Feedback

- Water Supply – The City should aggressively pursue well-field expansion to secure additional water supplies and lessen the need for restrictions under the Outdoor Water Use By-law.
- Water Rates – Concern was expressed that the current rate system does not distinguish between water use and wastewater.

Outside Water Use By-Law Review

Community Forum #2 – Meeting Summary

February 5, 2013
6:30pm-9:00pm
Guelph Italian Canadian Club

Number of Participants: 5

Discussion Summary

Questions Raised by Participants

- Is there information the City can provide for the next round of consultation on how much water is used for each outside water activity?
- Can the City also provide information or modelling results on the future impacts of climate change on water supplies? Also for future expected precipitation levels?
- What happens during level black under the Outside Water Use By-law and what would this mean for residents and businesses?
- Is 7am-9am the most efficient time to allow residents to water their gardens because the sun is out during that time?
- Should pool owners be required to use covers/blankets during the summer to minimize water loss and retain heat?

Participant Feedback on the Outside Water Use Policy and By-Law

- Communications – The City needs to enhance its marketing and outreach of the Outside Water Use By-law because not all residents are not aware of the by-law requirements
- Zone System for Watering Restrictions – The City should consider a zone system (similar to the zones used by the Guelph Waste Management Department) for implementing water use restrictions. Under such a system, the City would be divided up into zones with certain zones allowed to water their lawns on specific days. This would be easier to implement and monitor and would be easier for residents to understand.
- Vehicle Washing – One suggestion was to leave the requirements as they are now. Another was to review the restrictions in view of the potential use of car wash businesses, which use more water than washing in the driveway.
- Pools – Consider adding another level after level 2 (red) but before level black that restricts water use for pools.
- Watering Gardens – The current approach should be maintained. It is important for residents to be able to water their gardens/vegetables on a regular basis.
- Watering Time Restrictions – The City should consider adjusting its morning watering timeframe from 7am-9am to 6am-8am to limit the amount of sunlight on lawns during the watering period.

Other Feedback

- Water Usage Data – The City should provide information that details how much water is used for what activity. This would help educate the public and generate more informed participation.
- Historical Weather Projections – The City should display its weather data and modelling information to illustrate expected precipitation and water supply availability.

Outside Water Use By-Law Review

Business Roundtable #1 – Meeting Summary

February 5, 2013
9:30am-12:00pm
Guelph Italian Canadian Club

Number of Participants: 1

Discussion Summary

Questions Raised by Participants

- What is the objective of the Outside Water Use By-Law Review?
- What are water usage policies for City run sports fields?

Participant Feedback on the Outside Water Use Policy and By-Law

- Program Levels – The 3 level system is working fine.
- Irrigation – The City has included irrigation in the Program and By-law and has communicated things well, but residents are not understanding or knowledgeable about the requirements.
- Smart Controllers – The City should encourage the use of smart controllers to help control water usage. The current Outside Water Use By-law is silent on smart controllers. The by-law should address smart controllers in the future especially for sports fields. There is also a question of whether people who have smart controllers should be exempt from the by-law.
- Master Valves – The City should encourage the use of main shutoff valves to help manage water use and reduce the potential for wastage.

Other Feedback

- Bulk Water – If the City had more than one Bulk Water storage facility, it would be beneficial for businesses. The card system has not proven to work well with local construction. Cards are not easily available.
- Drip Irrigation – The system is not very popular with residents because it is difficult to visually see results without close examination of the garden. Other low volume irrigation options are available which provide visual results, yet they are more expensive.
- Follow up Program – The City should audit homes and commercial irrigation systems to ensure they have well maintained and functioning systems and are conserving water. They should also encourage annual assessments on larger irrigation systems to help ensure they are well. Compliance with regulations for irrigation systems may still be an issue.