



# HALDIMAND COUNTY

**Report PW-ES-08-2016  
of the General Manager of Public Works  
For Consideration by Council in Committee**

**RE: Improvements to the Municipal Drain Maintenance Process**

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide Council with information on proposed improvements to the municipal drain maintenance process.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT Report PW-ES-08-2016 Re: Improvements to the Municipal Drain Maintenance Process dated January 18, 2016 be received as information.

Prepared by:

Tyson Haedrich, M. Eng., P. Eng.  
Director, Engineering Services  
Date: January 18, 2016

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:

Paul Mungar, C.E.T., CMM III  
General Manager  
Public Works Department

Donald G. Boyle  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **BACKGROUND:**

At the June 16, 2015 Council in Committee meeting the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture (HFA) presented a letter (see Attachment 1) endorsing four recommendations related to the municipal drain maintenance process. In conjunction with the letter, Wayne Nyomtato, an HFA Director, appeared as a delegation and expressed concerns related to the Harrop Drain maintenance completed in early 2015. Following the delegation and subsequent discussion Council provided staff with the following direction:

*“THAT the correspondence from the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture Re: Issues Pertaining to Municipal Drains in Haldimand County dated June 8, 2015 be received as information;*

*AND THAT staff be directed to review the existing process, meet with the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture to review and report back to Council on the recommendations of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture.”*

This report is to provide Council with staff’s proposed improvements to the municipal drain maintenance process in response to the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture’s endorsed recommendations.

## **ANALYSIS:**

### **Proposed Municipal Drain Maintenance Process Improvements**

Following the June Council in Committee meeting, County staff met to review the existing municipal drain maintenance process and to determine how it could be improved particularly in response to the County’s experience with the Harrop Drain maintenance project. One of the main components for review was the communication / notification portion of the process which appears to be causing the majority of issues with landowners on municipal drains.

In order to improve communications with landowners that will be having work done on their property, the County is proposing three improvements to the drain maintenance notification process as follows:

- Notification Letter – County staff will issue a letter to landowners who will have work done on their property approximately one month prior to work starting.
- Posted Signs – yellow signs will be posted at each municipal drain road crossing approximately one month prior to work starting.
- Door hanger – distributed to all landowners who will have work done on their property approximately two weeks prior to work starting.

All three communications will have the Engineering Services Administrative Assistant as the single point of contact to minimize the chances of miscommunication.

These changes are shown in Fall Year One of the municipal drain maintenance notification process (see Attachment 2) and are focused on improving communication with landowners having work done on their properties.

An additional improvement to the process is in Spring Year Two when a letter will be issued to all properties on the drain with an estimated assessment based on the drain assessment schedule and the municipal drain grant application. This letter will provide property owners on the drain with their estimated assessment for the drain maintenance work in advance of the final bill being issued the following winter.

### **Haldimand Federation of Agriculture Recommendations**

As shown in the attached letter, the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture has endorsed four recommendations related to municipal drain maintenance. In order to address these recommendations, County staff reviewed each recommendation and proposed a County action in response. The County responses were presented to both the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture at their November 2015 monthly meetings for discussion and feedback.

A summary of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture recommendations, the proposed County actions and the feedback received from the two organizations is as follows:

#### **HFA Recommendation #1** - Notification is to be sent to all residents affected.

**County Action:** *The County has reviewed communication/notification process and will be implementing improvements including posted signage, door hangers, etc.*

**Feedback:** *Additional methods of notification also recommended, including notices in the local newspapers and on the County website, email notices, notices in the tax bills. The issue of absentee landowners was also brought up.*

#### **HFA Recommendation #2** - A written agreement will be signed between the contractor, owner, and municipality (to include a signoff at the start and at completion).

**County Action:** *The County has reviewed the possibility of implementing this type of agreement with the County's Purchasing Division. A written agreement is not feasible as the formal tender with contractor is a binding document that covers work. Owner concerns will be addressed through tender if County is notified.*

**Feedback:** *Agreed if notification process works.*

#### **HFA Recommendation #3** - There will be a site visit at the farm at least ten business days prior to work commencement. Issues to be addressed: work to be done, land access, discussion of compensation for crop damage (if applicable) and clean up.

**County Action:** *County believes that updated communication/notification process will allow sufficient time for property owners to contact County so that site specific concerns can be addressed before maintenance work starts.*

**Feedback:** *Agreed if notification process works.*

**HFA Recommendation #4** - Haldimand County is to supervise the project at all times.

**County Action:** *County has reviewed cost/operational issues associated with full-time supervision of all drain maintenance projects. Full-time supervision would require the hiring of temporary contract inspectors to supervise work as the County only has one full-time Drainage Superintendent. Potential cost implications are an increase of 50 to 100% in the cost to complete the work on each drain. County is proposing that if an individual property owner wants full-time supervision that the County will hire an inspector at the property owner's cost. The costs are estimated at \$1,200 per day of inspection.*

**Feedback:** *Agreed with proposal. Daily inspection by County staff is expected.*

County staff have benefitted from the discussions with the Agricultural Advisory Committee and Haldimand Federation of Agriculture and believe that the improved communication/notification process will result in better communications throughout the process. Staff have taken the feedback and will use it to continue to improve the drain maintenance process.

It should be noted that the County completed the full 10-year cycle of the drain maintenance program in 2015 and that the drains being cleaned going forward were last maintained ten years ago. The start of the new drain maintenance cycle will result in less disruptive maintenance activities including smaller amounts of debris removed from the drain, less tree and other vegetation removal, and more landowner familiarity with the drain maintenance process.

### **BUDGET/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

In January 2015, Council approved a Municipal Drain and Construction Maintenance Billing Policy through CS-FI-01-2015. The Municipal Drain Notification process as shown as Attachment 2 should be viewed in conjunction with the timeline of Municipal Drain Maintenance Billing Procedures provided in CS-FI-01-2015.

In addition to the proposed improvements to the maintenance process, Finance and Engineering Services staff are continuing to improve the municipal drain billing process to increase the efficiency of the program and reduce the time between the maintenance work being completed and the time the work is billed out to the assessed properties.

One of the ways this is being done is by providing Council with a memo rather than a report for the billing with the appropriate Municipal Drain Billing By-law presented for approval at the following Council meeting. This will reduce the staff time required to prepare each individual report but still allow Council time to discuss the billing if necessary.

As noted in the policy, assessment will be added to the interim billing, to be paid over four equal installments in the year of billing. Unfortunately, staff are unable to present a billing by-law for Council approval at this time. It is expected that this will be completed in time for the final billing of property taxes in July.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL IMPACTS:**

Not applicable.

**LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLANS:**

The construction and maintenance of the Municipal Drain System is consistent with the County’s strategic priority of “Growing our Local Economy by Creating Economic Opportunity” by improving drainage and crop yields for the agricultural sector.

**CONCLUSION:**

County staff believe that the key to the municipal drain maintenance process is improved communication with landowners that will have work done on their property and that the improvements discussed in this report will benefit the entire drain maintenance program.

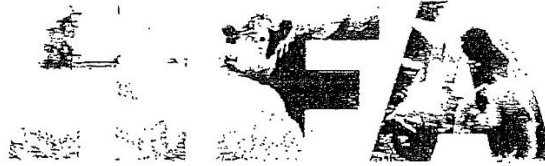
**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Correspondence from Dianne Booker, President of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture.
2. Municipal Drain Maintenance Notification Process.

<b>REVIEWED BY:</b> Yes or Not applicable	
Clerk’s	Not applicable
Community Services Department	Not applicable
Finance	Yes
Health & Social Services Department	Not applicable
Human Resources	Not applicable
Information Systems	Not applicable
Legal	Not applicable
Public Works Department	Not applicable
Planning & Economic Development Department	Not applicable
Support Services	Not applicable
Other	Not applicable

<b>CLERK’S DIVISION REVIEW</b>	
Report: PW-ES-08-2016 RE: Improvements to the Municipal Drain Maintenance Process	
<b>COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE: RECOMMENDATION NO</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Approved with Amendments <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<b>COUNCIL: RESOLUTION NO:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Approved with Amendments (Noted below) <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
Amended Recommendation(s):	
Council Direction:	
Clerk’s Division Action Taken:	

Marlene



Dear Mayor Hewitt and County Council:

The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture (HFA) had been approached initially by David Phibbs, and then later by Tom and Marlene Phibbs to act as an advocate on their behalf with the County of Haldimand, specifically in regards to the issue of the Harrop drain.

The issues that precipitated this request were related to the clean-up of the Harrop drain in 2014/2015.

Wayne Nyomtato had a chance to tour the affected area on the Phibb's properties. And what struck him most was the damages that these owner's had incurred; it reminded him of very much of an area struck by a tornado.

The following four recommendations have been endorsed by HFA:

- Notification is to be sent to all residents affected
- A written agreement will be signed between the contractor, land owner, and municipality (to include a signoff at the start and at completion)
- There will be a site visit at the farm at least ten business days prior to work commencement. Issues to be addressed: work to be done, land access, discussion of compensation for crop damage (if applicable) and clean up
- Haldimand County is to supervise the project at all times

We appreciate that County Council has given their time to attend to our request that includes adoption of these resolutions.

Sincerely:

Dianne Booker  
President  
Haldimand Federation of Agriculture

## Municipal Drain Maintenance Notification Process

