




# Town of Onoway

## Council Policy

| Number  | Title                            |                |                |                |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| C-WS-SEW-1  | Sanitary Sewer Lines - Blockages |                |                |                |
| Approval  | Originally Approved              |                | Last Revised   |                |
|  | Resolution No:                   |                | Resolution No: | 250/23         |
|   | Date:                            | April 10, 1995 | Date:          | Sept. 14, 2023 |
|   |                                  |                | Resolution No: | 472/18         |
|   |                                  |                | Date:          | Dec. 19, 2018  |
|   |                                  |                | Resolution No: |                |
|   |                                  |                | Date:          |                |

### Purpose

To establish guidelines for staff concerning procedures dealing with the blockage of private sanitary sewer services/lines, as well as to outline to property owners the degree of involvement of the Town in issues concerning sewer blockage. Also, to minimize the impacts of wastewater service line disruptions.

The Town of Onoway owns and operates a sanitary sewer collection system consisting of trunk sanitary sewers, sanitary sewer mains, and sanitary sewer services from sewer mains to the property line.

### Policy Statement

This Policy deals with the backup of sanitary sewer into private residences and businesses. It is intended to cover only sanitary sewer backup and is not applicable to the storm water drainage system.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- a) "Chief Administrative Office" means the Chief Administrative Officer as appointed by Council or the Chief Administrative Officer's designate.
- b) "Council" means the duly elected Council of the Town of Onoway, as defined by the Alberta Municipal Government Act.
- c) "Property Owner" means a person or an entity included in the classification of 'business and

government' (such as corporations, governments, sole proprietorships and partnerships, and other legal types) that has property title transferred to, recorded in, registered in, or otherwise carried in their name.

d) "Resident" means the occupant of the property.

e) "Town" means the Town of Onoway.

## **Service Standards/ Expectations**

The Town of Onoway owns and operates a sanitary sewer collection system consisting of trunk sanitary sewers, sanitary sewer mains, and sanitary sewer services from sewer mains to the property line.

The Town recognizes a responsibility to maintain this system such that it will carry away liquid wastes meeting the following criteria:

- a. No person shall discharge into the sanitary sewer any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, or viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer.
- b. The owner of any building or facility connected to the sanitary sewer collection system has a responsibility to ensure that any liquid waste discharged from their property line into the Town sanitary sewer system meets the criteria outlined above.

### **1. First Response**

- a. If a resident is experiencing sewage backup into their home, they should call the Public Works dept.
- b. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Town shall respond by investigating for free flow in the sanitary sewer mains.

### **2. Sanitary Sewer Mains**

- a. If no blockage is observed in the mains, the customer shall be instructed to contact a plumber certified in the Province of Alberta to open the service line, from the house cleanout to the Town's sanitary sewer main.
- b. If the sanitary sewer backup has its origins within the sanitary sewer main, the Town is responsible for all costs required to restore the sewer to proper operating conditions.
- c. Backups into basements are not the responsibility of the Town. Claims for compensations shall not be considered unless negligence can be proven on the part of the Town, its employees, or its authorized representatives.
- d. If the Town or its agents are proven negligent and have caused the backup, the Town may be responsible for all costs including those that occurred on private property.

- e. If any property owner incurs damages to a property or building due to a sanitary sewer main backup and the property owner wishes to claim compensation based upon the case of Town negligence, the property owner must submit a written claim to the Town's Insurance Company.

### 3. Sanitary Sewer Services - Private

If no problems are found with the sanitary sewer main, the Town will provide a copy of this policy to the property owner and shall advise the property owner:

- a. To obtain the services of a certified plumber to check the sanitary sewer service to determine the nature and type of blockage;
- b. If the blockage is located on private property (between the property line and the residence) the property owner is responsible for all costs associated with the sewer backup;
- c. Should the plumber provide evidence supporting a claim that the cause of the obstruction is from any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer or any foreign object that entered the sewer service line from within the building, or tree roots on any section of the service line, the customer shall be responsible for the costs of the repair.
- d. Should the plumber provide video evidence supporting a claim that the obstruction is from anything other than any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer or any foreign object that entered the sewer service line from within the building, or tree roots on any section of the service, the customer shall provide a video record of the obstruction to the Town. This video may be produced by a contracted service provider.
- e. If an investigation by the Town determines the obstruction is from anything other than any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer or any foreign object that entered the sewer service line from within the building, or tree roots on any section of the service, the following protocols shall be adhered to:
  - i. Should the cause of the claim be determined to be situated on the portion of the service line from the sanitary main to the property line, the Town shall assume reasonable costs incurred by the customer for the opening of the sewer by the plumber. The Town will also assume costs of repair.
  - ii. Should the cause of the claim be determined to be situated on the portion of the service line from the property line to the residence the customer shall obtain the services of a private contractor to repair the service if necessary. The costs of any repair shall be assumed by the customer.
  - iii. Should no problem be detected or is caused by than any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer or any foreign object that entered the sewer service line from within the building, or tree roots on any section

of the service line, the customer shall obtain the services of a private contractor to repair the service if necessary. The costs of service or repair shall be assumed by the customer.

- iv. Should the problem co-exist on private property and between the main and property line, the Town shall in its sole discretion determine a fair apportionment of the costs of repair between the Town and the customer.
  - v. A letter of acknowledgement to authorize the activity required to complete any custom services shall be in place prior to commencement of repair. This letter shall identify responsibility to pay as may be determined.
  - vi. Repairs made by the Town or on behalf of the Town by contracted services, pursuant to this policy, shall be invoiced as required to recover actual costs for the repair.
- f. A blockage within the owner's portion of the service line must be cleared to the Town's sewer main at the property owner's cost; and
- g. If the certified plumber is not successful in resolving the sewer problem within six hours of working on site, the property owner shall advise the Town. The Town will review with the plumber and property owner other options to consider.

#### 4. Sanitary Sewer Services – Town of Onoway

If the certified plumber determines the blockage is beyond the property line (between the property line and the sanitary sewer main) the following conditions will apply:

- a. If the blockage is caused by any fat, grease, improperly shredded garbage, ashes, cinders, animal parts, or any other solid, viscous substance capable of causing an obstruction to the flow of a sanitary sewer or any foreign object that entered the sewer service line from within the building, the property owner is responsible for all costs;
- b. If the blockage is caused by a collapsed or misaligned service line (greater than 25%) the Town will pay all costs to repair the sewer service, including the plumbing costs incurred by the property owner, to discover the cause of the problem (provided the Town was contacted by the property owner or certified plumber prior to work commencing). The Town will not be responsible for any clean-up of the basement for sewer that has backed up into the basement unless Town negligence can be demonstrated.

#### 5. Sewer Blockage Due to Root Build-up

- a. Root blockage of sanitary sewer mains shall be dealt with as per Section 2 dealing with Mains.
- b. Root blockage of a sewer service to the sewer main will be the responsibility of the property owner. The Town will assist in determining the most appropriate treatment for the problem. The allocation of repair/clean-up costs remain with the property owner unless the origin of the roots is from a tree within the Town.

## 6. Town Assistance to Private Property Owners and Related Costs

- a. If the property owner is unable to obtain the services of a plumber, the Town or its authorized representatives may undertake the work required and bill the property owner accordingly. Prior to commencement of any repairs, the property owner must authorize the work in writing and agree to the terms and conditions of this policy statement.
- b. Property owners are urged to consult a certified plumber regarding the installation of a backflow prevention valve on their sewer service if they feel there is unwarranted risk of flooding their basement.
- c. Property owners are encouraged to have adequate insurance coverage under their home owner policy for sewer backups.

### Attachments

N/A

### Revisions:

| Resolution Number | MM/DD/YY       |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 250/23            | Sept. 14, 2023 |
| 472/18            | Dec. 19, 2018  |
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