

Crackdown on discharging pool water might be revisited

By Brock Weir

Tougher bylaws on how homeowners can discharge the treated water from their swimming pools and hot tubs could soon be back on Council's agenda.

Last week, Council members signed off on a motion brought about by Councillor Wendy Gaertner tasking staff to come back with a series of recommendations on how existing sewer bylaws within Aurora could be changed to address environmental concerns stemming from the discharge of chemically treated water.

It is an issue which should be treated with importance, she said, given Aurora's position on the Oak Ridges Moraine, as well as at the headwaters of the Holland River Watershed.

"The bottom line is when it may result in a hazard or other adverse effect to vegetation or the natural environment, that is what we need to take care of here," she said. "I look forward to seeing what staff come back with. I am not just pulling this out of a hat; it is because we're at the headwaters, we're also on the Oak Ridges Moraine, and water that goes into our systems can adversely affect the natural environment and we need to take care of that."

Her motion was approved 7 ? 1 (Councillor John Abel was not at the meeting).

Speaking in favour of the motion, Councillor Tom Mrakas said it was an important issue to look into addressing.

"I know that other municipalities like Mississauga have set some regulatory measures in place in regards to pool discharge," he said.

"I look forward to seeing what staff come up with and present to us in a bylaw and I am looking forward to moving forward."

This is not the first time Aurora has tried to tighten up measures surrounding the discharge of pool and hot tub water.

The issue was first highlighted in the last term of by environmentalist Peter Piersoll and his concerns were subsequently addressed, at least in part, by the Town's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC).

The EAC recommended an education campaign throughout the Town, focusing on showing the public where ? and how ? to discharge pool water, including the neutralization of pool chemicals, but some of the advice was a bit impractical.

"Some of the information we released back in 2016 did make reference to one option [being] to discharge pool water into the sanitary sewer system," said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning. "We did realise there is a complication there with respect to how homeowners can actually do that, running a line into their home. I think it is probably time to revisit the best approach to discharge pool water. We will do some additional investigation and I think the next step would be to report back to Council with suggested amendments to our current municipal sewer bylaw."

"Our current bylaw does not speak specifically to where or how to discharge pool or hot tub water. It speaks in general terms with respect to discharging inappropriate substances directly into the sanitary or storm sewer, so our bylaw doesn't speak to discharge of pool water."

The lone holdout voting against the motion was Councillor Paul Pirri, who said he just didn't see the merit.

"My parents have a pool, the condo I live in has a pool. From a practical standpoint for residents in Aurora who are lucky enough to have pools like I was growing up, there are some big problems with regulating that," he said, noting that pipes would need to go directly into the sewer line for proper discharge into the sanitary sewer system. "I think the public awareness campaign is a great issue, I think finding a way to neutralize the chemicals is a great thing we can do from a communications standpoint, but I hesitate to over-regulate this and I don't think it is a massive problem."