

All is not well in Carlisle

Water supply is inadequate, well users say

BY CAROL PHILLIPS

CARLISLE ♦ Residents on the communal well system in Carlisle used so much water on their lawns last week that they twice drained the water tower dry.

That forced the city to impose a watering ban and spawned complaints from residents that Hamilton isn't providing enough water to keep their properties green.

Scott Stewart, general manager of public works, said many large homes on acre-sized lots are using in-ground sprinklers to water the gardens for several hours at a time, and that led to 600 households being placed on an outdoor watering ban. The need for continuing the ban will be reviewed tomorrow.

Carlisle residents pay some of the highest taxes in Hamilton. There are large properties with extensive gardens.

The city approved the development. But there isn't enough water to keep the greenery going.

Stewart says the water-supply systems are designed using a provincial standard of 350 litres of water per household per 24-hour period. Last Monday, when the tower ran dry by midnight, area households were using an average 550 litres over three hours.

On Tuesday, when the water tower ran dry again around 10:30 p.m., area households were using an average 2,000 litres of water over just a four-hour period.

Residents say they need to water. Homeowners are frustrated as they watch their lawns and expensive landscaping die off. They say this has been an annual problem and they pay high enough taxes that fixing the capacity of the water system should be a priority.

"At some point in time, it seems like a problem that's going to have to be dealt with rather than pushing it off on people using their sprinkler systems," said Tom Houston of Elderberry Lane, who just got his system up and running when the watering ban was imposed.

Kevin Lord, who lives down the road, has already received one warning from the city because he wasn't aware of the ban. He looks out over his browning grass and mentions the dead trees he's had to replace over the years.

It's all very frustrating for residents, said Lord, who built his home nine years ago.



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Carlisle resident Kevin Lord is unhappy at the watering ban. He and his neighbours are frustrated that the well system is inadequate for their gardening needs — despite the high property taxes they pay.

"The more we try to improve our property and keep things up out here, the worse it gets," he said. "You can't do anything right, especially with the attitude that appears to come from the city.

"It's frustrating because they haven't paid any attention to the infrastructure that's required for the amount of homes out here."

While Stewart agrees with residents that suburban-style development in the village has put stress on the system, he says they must also start using water more efficiently.

"I wouldn't sign off on any more development permits up there because of this issue," he said. "We've got to get that 2,000 (litres) number down. It's just a different mindset when it comes to the use of water. One resident called and complained that five hours wasn't enough to water the lawn."

Stewart fears that the planned improvement of the system will only allow residents to use up the water at a faster rate.

City councillor Margaret McCarthy said it's been an ongoing battle for her at city hall.

"You can't allow that kind of development and taxation and then not facilitate the requirements necessary to maintain it," she said. Lord, for example, pays \$7,000 in property taxes. McCarthy said some homeowners pay close to \$20,000.

McCarthy said she realizes there are issues of both conservation and development. "The consumption is (extreme)," she acknowledged. "But the properties are huge — which have been approved!"

The water ban and the state of the water system are sure to play a role in the coming battle against plans to build a quarry in the area, near Mountsberg Road. Opponents argue it will affect the quality and quantity of the groundwater that supplies the communal well system.

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