

THE PROVINCE

Charlottetown Coun. Eddie Rice says sewer/water pipes must be priority.

- The Guardian (Charlottetown)
- 22 Jan 2015
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City workers make repairs to a Charlottetown water and sewer line this week near Queen Street. The city's infrastructure is comprised of piping that varies in age from the newly installed in 2014 to the very old from 1888.

It's time to get serious about Charlottetown's aging water and sewer infrastructure, says Coun. Eddie Rice.

The chairman of the water and sewer committee says it's an issue that needs to be top priority.

Like most municipal water and sewer systems across North America, Charlottetown's infrastructure is comprised of piping that varies in age from the newly installed in 2014 to the very old from 1888.

Rice provided The Guardian with information that indicates the capital city has roughly 485 kilometres of water and sewer piping with more than 45 per cent of it older than 50 years.

A bit more than 22 per cent of it is older than 80 years.

The typical life expectancy of water and sewer piping is between 80 and 100 years.

Rice says to avoid major failures the city needs to begin a rehabilitation program that achieves approximately one per cent of the system rehabilitated or replaced each year going forward.

With \$14 billion set to roll out of the new Building Canada Fund over the next decade and \$2 billion coming out of the federal government's gas tax fund, Rice said the money to help is there.

"We have a chance to go to the feds for infrastructure money. This is the very thing that fits the mandate," Rice said. "We're going to have to start the program the same way we started the harbour program and the same way we had to start the new well field and conservation (initiative)."

The harbour program Rice refers to the storm water/sanitary water separation project that will eliminate sewage from pouring into the Hillsborough River when heavy rains occur.

One per cent would represent 4.85 kilometres of network rehabilitation each year with an estimated cost of close to \$6 million.

The utility is planning to begin an annual program this year to achieve that goal.

In addition to infrastructure projects already planned this year, the utility is planning to rehabilitate 1.63 kilometres of sewer system that has been shown to have a high inflow and infiltration problem during rain and snow melt events.

The inflow and infiltration problem has resulted in sewer surcharging and impacted on customers.

The estimated cost of this project is \$2.7 million.

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Coun. Eddie Rice