

Charlottetown feeling water pressure

More than a dozen watermain breaks since January highlight need to replace infrastructure, says Coun. Eddie Rice

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- BY DAVE STEWART



A work crew was called to another watermain break on Thursday, this one on Mt. Edward Road.

Many of Charlottetown's underground water pipes are old and need to be replaced, says the chairman of the water and sewer committee.

Coun. Eddie Rice said so far this year the utility has had to deal with nearly 20 watermain breaks, one water service leak and three fire hydrants damaged by snowplows.

"They've been working 16-hour days," Rice said, referring to the utility crews. "We're the only crew that works outside in the elements. They're out digging down six and eight feet using backhoes. That makes the work hard."

The majority of the breaks occurred on cast iron watermains installed between 1958 and 1964. A small number were on pre-1910 cast iron watermains.

Rice said the failures resulted from a combination of corrosion and stress placed on them by age and winter conditions.

Rice said with development of the new water source underway and work all but completed on the storm water/sewer separation project attention must be turned to repairing these aging pipes.

“We are in a situation where rehabilitation has to be looked at across the city in a fashion that we can afford. It’s just further proof that we have to look at this in a serious way.”

The utility is spending \$2.8 million this year in the north end of the city. That should give people an idea of what Rice thinks the city will need to spend each year.

Rice said it’s something the city will need help with in terms of money.

“We have to have infrastructure money. We have to have the support of the feds and the province in order to make this happen.”

Much of the attention over the past few weeks has gone with the big breaks, such as the one near the RBC on University Avenue which saw water spill all the way down to Queen Street.

“It was a nightmare and a horror show,” said Coun. Mitchell Tweel, who represents the area, adding that the water was three feet high in places on Queen Street.

In the cold temperatures, that water quickly froze. Catch basins, in some cases, were blocked, creating quite a mess.

Tweel suggests the city have a standby crew at the city’s building on MacAleer Drive during a significant weather event.

Rice said it’s a good idea but one that is likely to come at a cost, one that could impact water bills.

“I agree with his idea and we’ll look at it. We’ll investigate if it’s affordable.”