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Town of Shelburne reminds residents to be mindful of what they flush

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

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The Town of Shelburne is asking residents to be mindful of what they flush down their toilets, as improper waste has caused delays and damage to the town's water treatment system.

Toilets are meant to flush primarily three items: human waste of both kinds and toilet paper.

The town, however, has noticed a concerning level of improper waste being flushed down toilets, leading to issues with sewage and treatment down the line.

The town is stressing that wipes, hygiene products, food, medicine and clothing do not belong in the sewage system, yet these items are being found as they make their way to the treatment plant.

These items can slow down, clog or even damage municipal infrastructure, leading to potentially costly delays, repairs and damages.

This rule extends even to items that might be marked as flushable. Washable wipes and other items remain unsuitable for Shelburne's sewage system because they do not break down sufficiently as waste does and can still cause blockages.

The town said that each pump jammed at a Sewage Pump Station (caused by flushed clothing items) requires a human response to restore service. This creates overtime costs and requires the pump to be pulled and manually cleared at a cost of $2,500 each time.

Last year, one sewage pump station was stopped seven times. The issues eventually necessitated the redesign and installation of an additional screening system, further raising costs for the town and its taxpayers.

These damages and blockages can do more than just rack up expensive repair bills in your own home. They can also lead to higher expenses for the whole town, as sewage rates might increase as a result. It is crucial to remain mindful of the community and your own pipes at home.

Town staff said that this damage also wears down the pumps, and one is already undergoing rebuilding due to a premature failure, which is set to cost $20,000 to fully replace. The damage and buildup also increase the need for regular maintenance and cleaning, from an annual routine to quarterly, running up charges of $6,000 per cleaning, which is a 75 per cent increase in frequency and cost.

In the future, the town is asking residents to consider these costs and be mindful of how they use the sewage system. If current behaviours continue and create further issues, the impact could be felt through residents' property tax bills.