

Public Information & Stakeholder Consultation

Proposed Updates for: Ottawa Backwater Valve & Sump Pump Incentive Program

October 25th 2024
Ellwood Hall, Jim Durrell Recreation Centre



PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Contribute your input!
Residents and industry welcome!

City of Ottawa By-law and Incentive Program for
**Storm and Sanitary Backwater
Valves and Sump Pumps**

The **frequency and severity of extreme weather events are increasing.**
The City is proposing several **Program updates** to help residents
better protect their properties from basement flooding.

Friday, October 25, 2024, 10:00 am – 12:30 pm
Ellwood Hall, Jim Durrell Recreation Centre
1265 Walkley Road, Alta Vista

Organized by CAFES in collaboration with the City of Ottawa



R.S.V.P. here.
<https://bit.ly/BackflowValve>



Final Meeting Report

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

CAFES Ottawa acknowledges that we operate on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation, a land rich in Indigenous history and home to diverse First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. We honor the Algonquins as the rightful stewards of the Ottawa River Watershed and commit to supporting their voices, rights, and sovereignty. We recognize the historical oppression faced by Indigenous communities and believe that fostering environmental stewardship through collaboration is essential to our shared journey of decolonization and healing, aiming for a future that honours the land and its original Peoples.

Appreciation and Thanks

We wish to acknowledge and thank all the residents and participants who attended the consultation which took place on unceded Algonquin territory. Your insights, questions, and suggestions were invaluable in shaping the direction of future flood prevention efforts in our community. We look forward to continuing this dialogue and working together to address the challenges of basement flooding in Ottawa.

We would like to express our gratitude to the City of Ottawa staff who played an instrumental role in this important climate resiliency information and consultation event. Special thanks go to our speakers Brian Simpson, Hiran Sandanayake, and Julia Robinson for helping us better understand the complexities of the topics, providing valuable insights and addressing participants' questions with clarity and expertise. Their thoughtful presentations and responses were essential in fostering a productive and informative discussion.

We would like to thank the City Councillors who attended, supported, and/or sponsored the event: Marty Carr (Alta Vista Ward), our main sponsor, Riley Brockington (River Ward), Sean Devine (Knoxdale-Merivale Ward), Laine Johnson (College Ward), and Shawn Menard (Capital Ward). We recognize that these wards were especially hard-hit by the August 2023 extreme rain and overland flooding event.

Finally we are grateful to the Institute of Catastrophic Loss Reduction for their knowledge and capacity support to CAFES.



**Institute for Catastrophic
Loss Reduction**

Building resilient communities

**Institut de prévention
des sinistres catastrophiques**

Pour des collectivités résistantes



Introduction

On Friday, October 25, 2024, CAFES (Community Associations for Environmental Sustainability) in collaboration with the City of Ottawa held a public information and consultation meeting on the proposed updates to the Residential Protective Plumbing Program (RPPP) and the Compassionate Grant Program.

This consultation provided an opportunity for residents to engage directly with city staff, voice concerns, ask questions, and suggest improvements. The feedback gathered from this session will help the City improve the existing programs.

This report details the input received from residents, including responses to the three main questions discussed, feedback on the current programs, concerns raised, and specific suggestions for improvement. The goal is to inform the planned program update with resident perspectives and lived experiences.





Program

- Welcome & Land Acknowledgement
 - Angela Keller-Herzog, Executive Director CAFES
- Introduction: Residential Basement Flooding
 - Councillor Marty Carr, Alta Vista Ward
- Introduction to City Staff
 - Brian Simpson: Manager, Water Utility Customer Service Infrastructure & Water Services Department
 - Hiran Sandanayake: Manager, Water Resources Planning & Engineering Asset Management Service, Infrastructure & Water Services Department
 - Julia Robinson: Program Manager, Climate Adaptation, Climate Change and Resiliency Services, Strategic Initiatives Department
- Staff Presentation (see Annex 1)
 - A. Context: Climate Ready Ottawa (Julia Robinson)
 - B. Proposed Updates: Residential Protective Plumbing Program (Brian Simpson)
 - C. Recommended Changes: Compassionate Grant Program (Brian Simpson)
- Question and Answer with Staff
- Break-out discussion groups
- Table Highlights
- Closing remarks & Next Steps
- Lunch Buffet and Community Connexions

Participation:

- Nearly 100 attendees with a range of neighborhoods represented
- 9 breakout tables for discussions

Key Discussion Areas

Discussion included introductions: Name, Neighbourhood, and “Why Am I Here?” question.

Residential Protective Plumbing Program (RPPP) Update

Question 1:

Your Views on the Residential Protective Plumbing Program Update?

The RPPP is designed to help homeowners prevent basement flooding by funding the installation of backwater valves, sump pumps, and other protective measures. Participants provided a broad range of feedback, from appreciation of the program’s value to concerns about its implementation and adequacy in light of increasing costs.

Positive Feedback:

Several participants expressed their appreciation for the program’s role in reducing the financial burden of flood prevention.

- **Streamlined Process:** The removal of the Closed Circuit Television Video (CCTV) inspection requirement was well received, with many attendees stating that it made the process more accessible, faster, and less expensive. Prior to this change, the CCTV inspection was considered a barrier to participation due to its cost and complexity.
- **Increased Accessibility:** Homeowners who had utilized the program expressed relief at the shortened application process, which is now more straightforward compared to the previous system.

Suggestions for Improvement:

Participants raised several areas for enhancement.

- **Improved Communication and Promotion:** Many participants indicated that increased outreach efforts for the Program would be beneficial, and that additional awareness campaigns are needed to reach all affected homeowners, particularly in neighbourhoods with older homes or high flood risk.
- **Increase Rebates:** A major concern was the insufficient rebate amounts given rising costs. Many residents noted that the \$5,000 to \$10,000 rebate (depending on the type of work) was not enough to cover the full cost of installation, especially considering increased labour costs and inflation in the construction and plumbing sectors. Several attendees suggested that rebates

be increased to reflect the real cost of the work. A suggestion for a rebate up to \$15,000 was made.

- **Requirement for Mandatory Implementation in New Builds:** There was significant interest in requiring builders to install backwater valves and sump pumps in new homes. A number of residents argued that the onus should not be on homeowners to retrofit homes after construction. Answer: This is already an enforced requirement for all new builds to ensure new homes are built to prevent flooding.
- **Clearer Guidance on Contractors:** Participants requested better guidance on how to find qualified plumbers who can install the required flood prevention measures. Many felt that the current process left them unsure about which contractors were qualified or familiar with the specific requirements for the program.
- **Eligibility Clarification:** There were numerous questions about eligibility, especially related to homeowners who had not yet experienced a flood. Many were unclear whether they could apply to the program before a flood event occurred. Answer: The program is available preemptively — homeowners do not need to have experienced flooding to be eligible for assistance.
- **Program Process Clarification:** Is there a pre-approval possible where the homeowner describes the intended work and the program confirms that the expenses will be covered up to a limit? Will plumber's diagnostic visits be eligible?
- **Working with Industry:** The uptake for the program could be leveraged by working with the plumbing sector and the insurance sector. More clarity is needed on whether insurance companies are willing to provide price breaks for backwater valves and sump pumps in place.

Key Questions & Responses:

- **Can homeowners apply retroactively for flood protection measures?**

Answer: Starting in 2025, recently installed flood protection measure work will be considered without a Part 1 application approval, where the Part 2 application provides complete documentation (Building Permit and Inspection, etc.).

- **Does installing backwater valves increase the risk of flooding for neighbours?**

Answer: No, installing protective plumbing on a homeowner's property does not increase the flood risk for neighbouring properties. The program is designed to reduce individual risk without negatively affecting the broader community.

Compassionate Grant Program Update

Question 2: Your Views on the Compassionate Grant Program Update?

The Compassionate Grant Program provides up to \$1,000 in financial assistance to residents whose properties have been impacted by basement flooding. This grant is intended to help cover immediate cleanup and repair costs.

Positive Feedback:

- Residents found the grant helpful, particularly those who were experiencing financial strain due to a recent flood event.
- The increased accessibility of the program was appreciated, with participants noting that the application process was relatively simple and easy to navigate.

Concerns and Suggestions:

- **Grant Amount Insufficient:** Residents felt that \$1,000 was not enough to cover anywhere near the cost of flood repairs, especially in cases where extensive damage occurred. Attendees estimated that repairs could cost \$10,000 to \$50,000 or more depending on the severity of the flooding. Participants suggested increasing the amount to better reflect realistic repair costs.
- **Short Reporting Window:** Several residents expressed concerns about the one-month reporting window for the Compassionate Grant. In cases of severe flooding, residents may need more time to assess the damage, arrange repairs, and complete the necessary paperwork. Suggestions were made to extend the reporting period to at least 60 days to give residents adequate time to apply.

Key Questions & Responses:

- **Can the Compassionate Grant be applied for more than once?**
Answer: The Compassionate Grant can be applied for once every five years. Residents expressed the need for clearer communication on this limitation, as many did not understand that it was not an annual program.
- **How does flooding affect property values?**
Answer: Flooding is considered a disclosure issue when selling a home. Homeowners are required to disclose any flooding incidents to prospective buyers, which could impact resale value. This has led to concerns about the long-term financial impact of flooding on property owners.

City's Role in Reducing Residential Basement Flooding

Question 3:

Do you think the City should do more or less regarding residential basement flooding? What? Why?

The discussion around this topic highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach to reducing flooding risks, including both infrastructure upgrades and community education.

Key Feedback:

- **Aging Infrastructure:** Many residents raised concerns about the condition of the City's aging infrastructure, particularly in neighbourhoods like Alta Vista and Carlington. They noted that older systems were not designed to handle the increasing volume of stormwater caused by urban densification and more frequent heavy rainfall events. Several residents emphasized that upgrading infrastructure should be a priority for the City, particularly in areas known to be flood-prone.
- **Flood Prevention Education:** There was strong support for increased community education on flood prevention measures, including sump pumps and backwater valves (installation and maintenance), but also other related measures such as basement sealing, foundation drainage systems, grading and related landscaping measures such as soak pits, rain gardens and permeable pavements. Residents felt that there was a lack of accessible, easy-to-understand information on how these systems work and how to properly maintain them. There was special concern expressed for new, young property owners who have little experience or knowledge of residential home maintenance, and even less on flood prevention measures and options.
- **Flood Maps and Localized Information:** Many participants requested detailed flood maps and information specific to their neighbourhoods. They emphasized the need for tailored guidance on flood prevention based on the unique infrastructure in each area. For example, some neighbourhoods have separated sewer systems (for stormwater and sanitary waste), while others have combined systems, and understanding the differences is critical for residents to make informed decisions. Suggestions were made that residential flood prevention programming by the City could be more proactive and targeted to known problem areas.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- **Neighbourhood-Specific Outreach:** Participants requested that the City target outreach efforts based on the specific needs of different neighbourhoods. For instance, providing localized information about the type of sewer system in each area could help homeowners better understand their flood risk and what measures to take.
- **Improved Communication Channels:** Many attendees suggested that the City distribute flood prevention information through multiple channels, such as water bills, community newsletters, and interactive online maps. These tools would help ensure that information is accessible to a wide range of residents, including those who may not attend public consultations or read local newspapers.
- **Comprehensive Infrastructure Upgrades:** Some residents recommended that the City invest in proactive infrastructure upgrades, including stormwater management systems and flood mitigation measures such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and drainage improvements.

Key Questions & Responses:

- **Are new developments required to include flood protection measures?**
Answer: Yes, the City requires new builds to incorporate flood prevention measures such as backwater valves and sump pumps as part of the building permit process. This requirement is intended to ensure that new homes are built to withstand the increasing risk of flooding.
- **What is being done to address flood risks in older neighbourhoods?**
Answer: In older neighbourhoods, the City is exploring ways to retrofit existing infrastructure to improve its capacity to handle heavy rain and prevent flooding. This includes the installation of additional stormwater storage and other measures to improve the resilience of the existing system.

Getting Involved & Next Steps

We appreciate your participation and the valuable feedback you've provided during this session. The City of Ottawa is committed to addressing basement flooding risks through ongoing programs and infrastructure improvements, and your insights are instrumental in shaping future initiatives. There are several ways to stay engaged and contribute to the ongoing dialogue:

1. Stay Informed

For updates on the Residential Protective Plumbing Program (RPPP), the Compassionate Grant Program, and other flood prevention efforts, please visit

the City of Ottawa's dedicated [flood prevention webpage](#) for the latest program information, guidelines, and news on upcoming consultations.

2. Join the City Conversation

We encourage you to continue engaging with us on this important issue. You can share your thoughts and ideas by visiting [Engage Ottawa](#), where you can participate in surveys, comment on ongoing projects, and participate in upcoming consultations in 2025 for the "[Climate Ready Ottawa](#)" resiliency strategy. Your input will help ensure that we develop solutions that reflect the needs of all residents.

3. Learn More About Flood Protection

If you're interested in learning more about flood prevention measures, such as backflow valves, sump pumps, and basement waterproofing, check out the resources provided by the [City](#) and [Intact Centre](#). Workshops and educational materials are available on how these measures can help protect your home from flooding.

4. Take Action in Your Community

Consider joining local neighbourhood associations, community eco-groups or the [CAFES network](#) (individual and organizational memberships).. These groups often host workshops, share valuable information, and collaborate on local flood mitigation projects. Attend a [CAFES Caucus](#), a meeting of concerned and engaged residents of Ottawa around a shared topic or issue area.

5. Contact your Councillor or City Staff

If you have specific questions or need additional assistance regarding the RPPP or the Compassionate Grant Program, feel free to reach out to the [City of Ottawa](#)'s flood prevention team:

- **Residential Protective Plumbing Program:** protectiveplumbing@ottawa.ca
- **Compassionate grant program:** compassionategrant@ottawa.ca
- **Rain Ready Ottawa:** rain@ottawa.ca
- **Climate Ready Ottawa:** climatechange@ottawa.ca

Or contact 311 to be directed to an appropriate staff.

Your involvement is critical to helping the City develop effective strategies that reduce flooding risks and build community resilience. Together, we can ensure Ottawa is better prepared for future challenges and more resilient to climate-related impacts.

Annex 1 - Staff Presentation

Residential Protective Plumbing Program

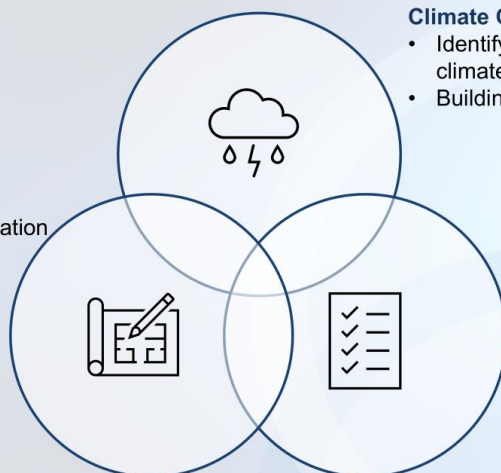
CAFES Public Information Session
October 25, 2024



Overview

Asset Management

- Planning and Strategy
- Risk Assessment and Mitigation Programming
- Renewal of Infrastructure



Climate Change and Resiliency

- Identifying strategies to mitigate climate risks
- Building resilient communities

Education and Preparedness Programs

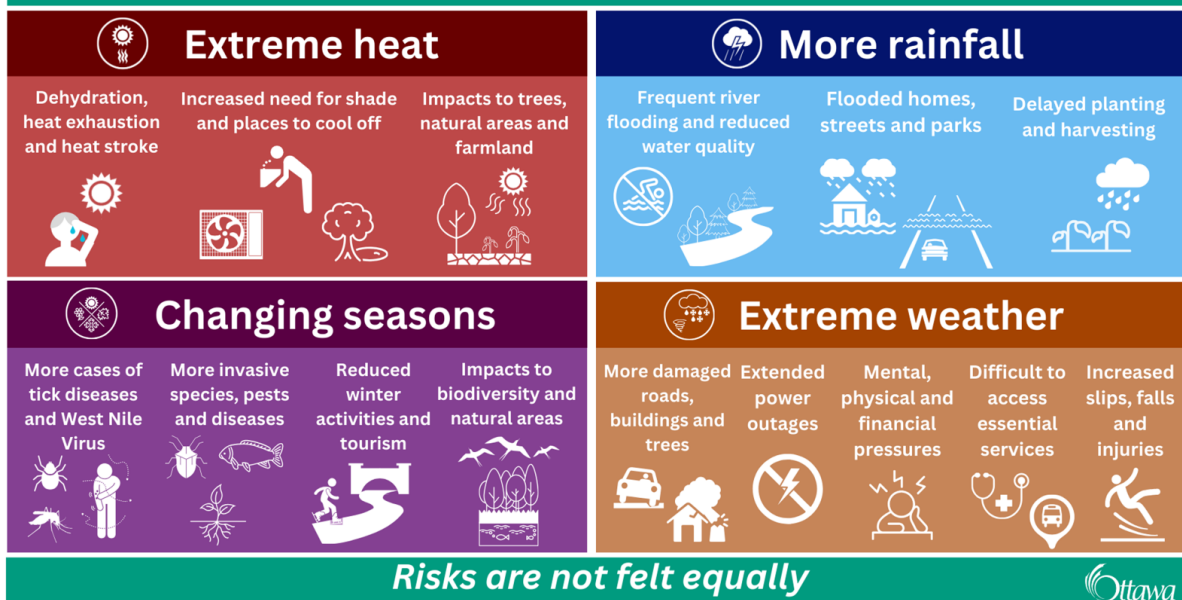
- Residential Protective Plumbing Program
- Compassionate Grant Program
- Rain Ready Ottawa
- Better Homes Ottawa Loan Program

Ottawa's Climate Resiliency Strategy



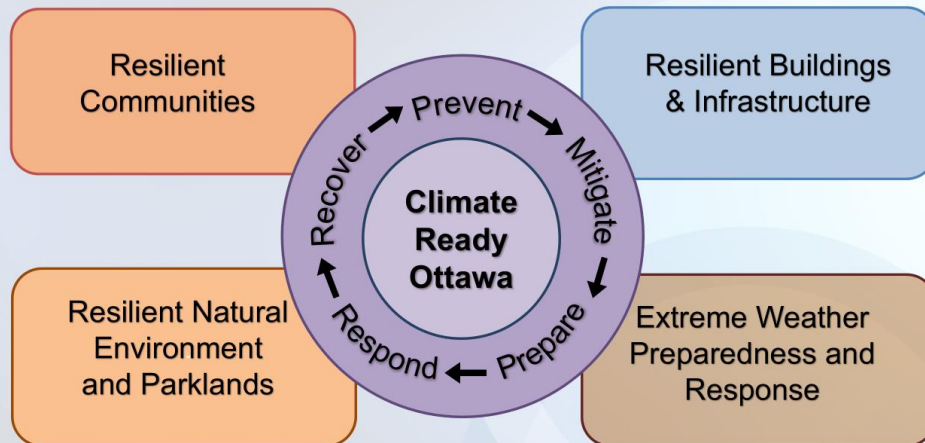
Learn more at: engage.ottawa.ca/climate-resiliency

What are the top risks of climate change in Ottawa?



Risks are not felt equally

Draft Climate Ready Ottawa - Framework



Key Actions: Resilient Communities

Education and outreach to communities and businesses on extreme heat, flooding and other climate risks



Add trees, shade structures and places to cool off in areas most at need



Strengthen flood mitigation and response plans for riverine and overland flooding



Support communities and local partners to take action through information and funding



Encourage local food production and support agricultural systems to adapt

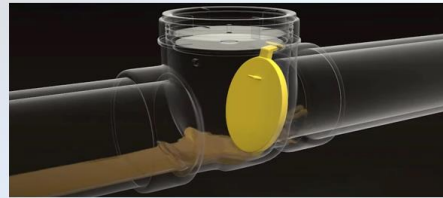


Expand flooding education and preparedness programs

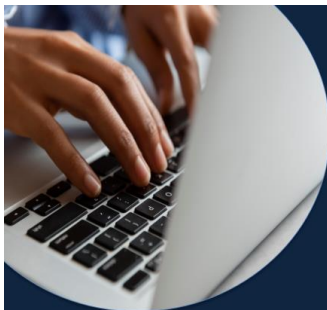


What is the Residential Protective Plumbing Program?

The Residential Protective Plumbing program (RPP) provides financial assistance to qualified City of Ottawa property owners for the installation of protective plumbing devices, such as sump pumps and storm and sanitary backwater valves to prevent water and sewage from flooding homes because of increased water level (surcharging) in the City's sewer system.



What we have heard...



The application process has too many forms, has multiple steps, and is difficult to navigate.

Many residents are contacting me about the lengthy and costly process to obtain minimal compensation through the Residential Protective Plumbing Program.

The requirement for a CCTV inspection also made the entire process more expensive.

At a time when the priority is getting water out of their basements, and making sure that things did not mold, residents told staff that they did not have the capacity to navigate a multi-step process.

Proposed Changes to RPP Program



Application Part 1 and Application Part 2 have been consolidated and the single application has been streamlined



Removal of the requirement for a closed-circuit television inspection (CCTV) and report



Removal of the external consultant's review for proposed scope of work



NEW Rebates:

Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power installed in an existing sump pit

New Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with battery backup power and construction of a sump pit

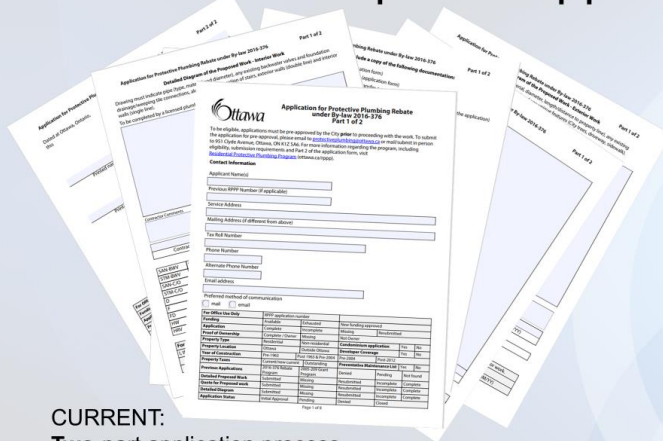


The work must be completed, and the application received within 12 months of the issuance of the Building Permit

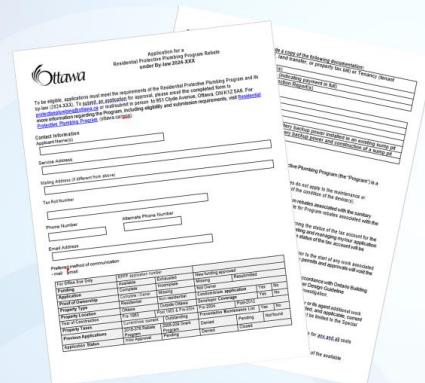


Eliminate the requirement for current property taxes

Current vs Proposed Application Form



CURRENT:
Two-part application process
totaling **ten** pages in length



PROPOSED:
One application that will be
three pages long

RPP External Consultation (Summer 2024)



1,132 visits to Engage Ottawa project page

66 completed surveys

What we heard:

- 70% were unaware of the program
- 33% 'unknown/not sure' if they have protective devices in their home
- 48% confirmed they do not have protective devices in their home
- 84% were in support of the revised application form

What is the Compassionate Grant Program?

The current Compassionate Grant program provides funding of \$1,000 to qualified residential property owners and tenants who have been affected by recurring flooding due to sewer surcharging because of significant rainfall.

To qualify, a property owner must provide proof of three or more sewer backups during a fifteen-year period.

Proposed Changes to the Compassionate Grant Program



Simplified application process with a reduced documentation requirement



Reduce the criteria to one sewer surcharge event with \$1,000 in damages reported to the City within one month of the event



Eliminate the requirement for current property taxes



The homeowner must undertake approved mitigation measures prior to any subsequent applications

What's next?

Proposed Residential Protective Plumbing program to be presented at Committee in Q1 2025.

Share your feedback on draft Climate Ready Ottawa at [Engage.ottawa.ca/climate-resiliency](https://engage.ottawa.ca/climate-resiliency)
Survey closes Friday November 8, 2024



Urban Flooding



Complex Integrated System

Topography

Geography

Extreme Rainfall Events

Private Protection Measures

Size of Storm and Sewer Pipes

Annex 2: Program Update Proposals

Residential Protective Plumbing Program (RPPP) & By-law Review

The City's 2022 Climate Change Vulnerability and Risk Assessment has identified increasing intensity and volume of precipitation as a priority risk. With this risk comes an increased likelihood of basement flooding which can result in expensive repairs and losses, and disruption of our daily lives.

The RPPP provides financial assistance for property owners to install protective plumbing devices that help reduce the likelihood of basement flooding and prevent storm water from entering residential properties.

The frequency and severity of extreme weather events are increasing; therefore, staff are proposing several Program amendments to help ensure the City is providing residents with the proper supports to better protect their properties from basement flooding.

Program Overview

The Program provides rebates to qualified City of Ottawa homeowners for the installation of protective plumbing devices, such as storm and sanitary backwater valves and sump pumps with backup power, to reduce the likelihood and severity of basement flooding.

Proposed Program Updates

The proposed Program updates will:

- Streamline the application process; and,
- Increase rebate supports available to Ottawa homeowners.

Proposed Application Process Updates

Besides reducing the length of the application form, staff are recommending removing the following requirements from the current application process:

1. Closed-circuit Television (CCTV) inspection of the sewer laterals,
2. Consultant Site Visit Reviews, and
3. No outstanding balance on property taxes.

Removing these requirements will increase eligibility, reduce the required steps residents must take to receive a rebate, and reduce the time required to review and process applications.

Proposed Rebate Items and Amounts

The table below provides the current and proposed rebate items and amounts.

Rebate Item	Current Rebate Amount	Proposed Rebate Amount
Building Permit	\$80	100 % of the Building Permit cost
Sanitary Backwater Valve only (interior)	\$700	\$1,000
Storm Backwater Valve only (interior)	\$500	\$1,000
Storm Backwater Valve (exterior)	\$1,750	\$2,500
New - Primary or Secondary Sump pump with battery backup power in an existing sump pit	\$1,250	\$1,500 *now includes the installation of a secondary pump
New – Primary or Secondary Sump Pump with backup power and construction of a sump pit	-	\$3,000
New – Private Storm Lateral	-	\$3,000

Note: should the cost of the work be less than the amount of the available rebate, the City shall rebate the lesser of the two amounts.

Revised Application Form

The recommendations include simplifying the current Residential Protective Plumbing application process. Ideally, the form should be straightforward and easy enough that property owners can complete it on their own, rather than needing a professional to assist.



For additional information, please contact rppbylawreview@ottawa.ca

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¹ <https://engage.ottawa.ca/residential-protective-plumbing-by-law-update>

Annex 3 - Residential Flood Prevention

THREE STEPS TO COST-EFFECTIVE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION

Step 1: Maintain what you've got at least twice per year

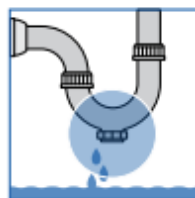
Do-it-yourself, \$0



- 1 Remove debris from nearest storm drain or ditch and culvert



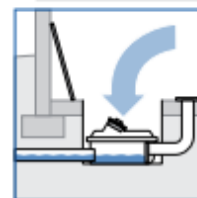
- 2 Clean out eaves troughs



- 3 Check for leaks in plumbing, fixtures and appliances



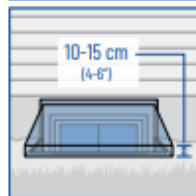
- 4 Test your sump pump



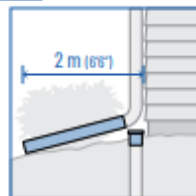
- 5 Clean out your backwater valve

Step 2: Complete simple upgrades

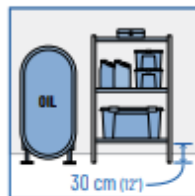
Do-it-yourself, for under \$250



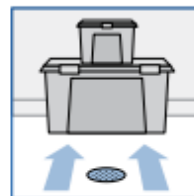
- 1 Install window wells that sit 10-15 cm above ground, and window well covers (where fire escape requirements permit)



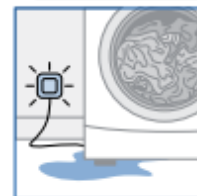
- 2 Disconnect downspouts, cap foundation drains and extend downspouts and sump discharge pipes to direct water at least 2 m from foundation



- 3 Store valuables and hazardous materials in watertight containers and secure fuel tanks



- 4 Remove obstructions to floor drain



- 5 Install and maintain flood alarm

Step 3: Complete more complex upgrades

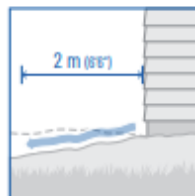
Work with a contractor, for over \$250



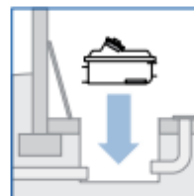
- 1 Install a rain garden to collect stormwater (at least 5 m from the foundation)



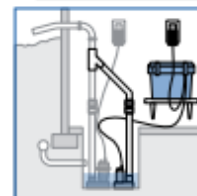
- 2 Convert paved areas to vegetation which absorbs more water and less heat



- 3 Correct grading to direct water at least 2 m away from foundation



- 4 Install backwater valve



- 5 Install backup sump pump and battery

INTACT CENTRE
ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION



Scan the code or click the link
for additional resources at
www.intactcentre.ca

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WATERLOO**