



HISTORY OF WATER SUPPLY/DISTRIBUTION IN STRATHROY

As a result of a lack of adequate fire protection or waterworks, a company was formed in 1901 known as “The Citizens Water, Gas and Electric Co.”. The company had a plan to install and operate a waterworks system including watermains for a 40 year period with the provision that the town could acquire the waterworks at the end of any five year period. The waterworks system was to be in operation before September 1, 1903. The plans called for a network of mains with 25 hydrants for fire and street watering for the town. The estimated cost to install the waterworks totaled \$32,000.00.

To keep within the estimates, the number of water mains was reduced and construction began on June 1, 1903 and finished on November 10, 2003. The project also included a pump house and a steel stand-pipe located on High Street with a storage capacity of 160,000 gallons. The tower was only 80 feet high and could only provide a pressure of 43 psi. In the case of a fire, the operator would close the valve to the storage tank and turn on the pumps to provide a pressure of 100 psi.0 per year. The original scope of the project was to provide fire protection.

In 1902, the Citizens Water Co. started to investigate possible pure water sources. The investigation looked at springs flowing out of “Quality Hill” on Kitridge Avenue, river water from Gilzean’s Creek, a drilling a test well at the current former PUC reservoir on North St.

HISTORY OF SEWAGE TREATMENT IN STRATHROY

On October 20th, 1916, a special meeting was held by council to act on communication from Dr. J. S. McCullough, Chief Officer of Board of Health for Ontario. His report had concluded that raw sewage was finding its way through the town sewers and contaminating the water supply. The outlets for the sewers were entering the river in close proximity to the location where was supply was obtained.

On April 11th, 1918 the P.U.C. ordered a chlorination plant at a cost of \$2004.00.

In much of Strathroy, septic systems worked well providing they were installed correctly. However, problems were experienced in low lying areas of town with inadequate drainage areas or sufficient space for proper sized disposal beds. When indoor plumbing became the accepted thing, there simply wasn't enough room in the densely populated downtown area for the discharge from the tanks to soak away. It wasn't uncommon to see a tank overflowing on the surface of the ground or discharging directly into storm drains.

Installing drains has always created problems in Strathroy. Before the advent of modern equipment, sometimes work had to be stopped in a particularly wet time as no progress was being made. Whenever the need for sewers was mentioned, there were plenty of doubters and few confident that it could be done. The Provincial Health authorities were concerned with the situation that existed in Strathroy.

In 1950 the Council, with Winston Pearson as Mayor, directed a campaign to sell sewers to Strathroy. The plans called for an activated sludge treatment plant serving the downtown area and part of the rest of the town. The estimated price of the project was \$79,000.00. However, when the tenders closed in 1951 the lowest tender was more than \$100,000.00 over the estimate. The engineer advised calling for tenders again at a later date. This was done in 1952. The plan had some sewers raised and a much cheaper disposal plant. This produced pricing much closer to the original estimate.

The sewers were paid for by the people who benefited from them. At a later date, sewers were extended to other areas and paid under Local Improvement Tax. Much of the South end of town is still without the benefit of sewers.

The disposal plant soon began to give trouble. It was a cheap design and more sewers being added to the system aggravated the condition. After careful consideration, the lagoon method of disposal was decided on. An agreement was reached with Adelaide Township and land acquired west of the town. The lagoon was constructed in 1962 at an estimated cost of \$200,000.

Part of the cost to users of the sewers is a monthly charge. This would be difficult for the town to collect so they asked the P.U.C. to do this for them as part of a utility bill.

In 2000, the sewage treatment plant was upgraded to a mechanical treatment plant with a capacity of 8,560 m³/day at a cost of \$6.2 million dollars. This plant would satisfy Strathroy's needs for the next 20 years.