

Loney Announces Plan to Reduce Sewage Overflows

Natural Infrastructure to be Expanded to Reduce Stormwater Run-off and Cost of Sewer Separation

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WINNIPEG, Manitoba – Shaun Loney announced today that when elected Mayor in October, he will engage Council to implement a three-point plan to reduce the amount of raw sewage discharged into Winnipeg's waterways in older areas of the City with combined sewers.

The City currently dumps raw sewage into Winnipeg rivers an average of 22 times per year degrading river water quality and contributing to the decline of Lake Winnipeg. The current **Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Master Plan** proposes to reduce average raw sewage dumped from 5.2 million cubic metres to 2.9 million cubic metres per year by 2045 at a capital cost of up to \$2.3-billion (2019 dollars). The plan is primarily focused on twinning pipes in the older areas of Winnipeg so that stormwater doesn't mix and overwhelm the sewage treatment system.

"I support Council's efforts to ramp up implementation of the CSO Masterplan," said Loney. "I will make this infrastructure request among my highest priority in negotiations with the other levels of government."

Loney's plan, however, seeks to make best use of resources that we have now to make a difference as quickly as possible by focusing on older areas of the City where pipes are not yet twinned. The strategy includes:

1. **Green infrastructure proposals** – In districts where green infrastructure has been identified as having high applicability, the City will seek proposals from any organization that can demonstrate that they can cost-effectively reduce the amount of community-wide runoff that otherwise would go into the combined sewer system.
2. **Incentives for private property owners** – Individual private property owners will be invited to be part of the solution with the City offering new incentives to capture, store or absorb runoff. For major landowners, especially those with large, hard-surfaced parking lots, these incentives will gradually be phased out and replaced by a levy based on estimated runoff volumes and the burden they place on the public sewer system. All new fees collected will be dedicated to stormwater management.
3. **Accelerated pilot projects and demonstrations** – Using civic-owned properties and utility rights-of-way, the City will launch an accelerated program to demonstrate methods already being used successfully by other jurisdictions and to explore new, innovative approaches to cost-effectively keep rainwater out of the sewer system that are compatible with Winnipeg's climate, soils and other conditions.

“The City needs to take a much closer look at using trees and a wide-range of other natural infrastructure as a wise use of tax dollars and utility fees to reduce combined sewer overflows,” Loney stated.

Noting that Winnipeg’s existing urban forest already avoids over one million cubic metres of stormwater runoff each year, Loney added that an expanded and healthier urban forest, along with other green infrastructure measures will intercept, absorb and hold stormwater significantly reducing the amount of runoff entering sewers during rain events. By absorbing rain where it falls, it will decrease the untreated runoff discharged into Winnipeg’s combined sewer system reducing overflow events.

Loney’s plan does not require new spending. The City of Winnipeg’s CSO Master Plan allocates only 10 percent for green infrastructure as part of the overall cost of twinning pipes in Winnipeg’s older neighbourhoods. Loney said he would prioritize funding green infrastructure from the money that CSO Master Plan has already allocated.

“I want the City of Winnipeg be far more ambitious capturing our annual rainfall in these older areas of the city,” said Loney noting that the City of Vancouver has set a target to capture and treat 90 percent city-wide.

Loney cited a report from Green Infrastructure Ontario that properly scaled and sited green infrastructure systems can manage runoff as effectively as conventional stormwater infrastructure at a comparable or lower cost. **The report states the green infrastructure can be anywhere from 5 to 30 percent less costly to construct, and approximately 25 percent less costly over its life cycle, than traditional infrastructure.**

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For More Information:

- Contact **Tom Code, Press Secretary** (comms@shaunforwinnipeg.com or 204-223-1290)
- See shaunforwinnipeg.com.
- See **Backgrounder** beginning on next page.

BACKGROUNDER

1. Types of green infrastructure that reduce runoff:

- Trees, bioretention systems (shallow surface depressions plated with native vegetation), and bioswales (swales with grass or other vegetation plus an enhanced soil top layer and water infiltration underlayer).
- Green roofs (vegetation of a rooftop to absorb and store rain and snowmelt e.g., Manitoba Hydro Place – contact Tom Akerstream at 204-227-2123 or akerstream@shaw.ca)
- Green streets (permeable paving; maximizing street tree canopy; protecting existing habitats and natural drainage; amending soil; etc.).
- Rainwater harvesting (collecting rainwater in small or large vessels such as barrels and cisterns for use in gardens or even for toilets, car washing, etc.).
- Downspout disconnection (redirecting water from roofs to nearby porous surfaces instead of being dumped into piping that carries sewage).

2. There is a shift in stormwater management from ‘grey’ to ‘green’ infrastructure.

“Historically, drainage was the primary aim of municipal stormwater management. However, in recent years leading jurisdictions have reversed this paradigm, with the aim of minimizing runoff by returning rain to natural pathways, including soil, vegetation, and the atmosphere.”

Green Communities Canada

3. Numerous ‘high potential’ opportunities for green infrastructure exist throughout Winnipeg neighbourhoods with combined sewers.

“Armstrong has been classified as a high GI (green infrastructure) potential district. Land use in Armstrong is mostly single and double family residential with large areas of commercial land use. This means the district would be an ideal location for bioswales, permeable paved roadways, cisterns/rain barrels, and rain gardens. The commercial areas in the west end of the district would be an ideal location for green roofs.”

Example from City of Winnipeg CSO Masterplan – Armstrong District

References and Information Sources:

[Soak It Up! Toolkit \(Second Edition\)](#). Green Communities Canada, 2017)

[Combined Sewer Overflow Master Plan](#). City of Winnipeg, August 2019.

[What is Green Infrastructure?](#) Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition.

[Rainwater Management Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) (see page 5).
City of Vancouver, April 2016.