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Council-In-Committee Meeting – April 14, 2026

Subject: 2025 Municipal Drainage Status Report
Report Number: PW-25-023
Division: Environmental and Infrastructure Services
Department: Environmental Services
Ward: All Wards
Purpose: For Information

Recommendation(s):

That Report PW-25-023 2025 Municipal Drainage Status Report be received as information.

Executive Summary:

The 2025 Municipal Drainage Status Report (DSR) provides an overview of Norfolk County's municipal drainage infrastructure status, maintenance activities, construction and improvements undertaken in the 2025 reporting period. The report supports the Drainage Superintendents and drainage staff's commitment to protect agricultural productivity, and municipal drain assets in accordance with the *Drainage Act*.

Norfolk County's Municipal Drainage team delivered strong results across all program areas. Over \$900,000 in drain maintenance was completed, nearly a 20% increase over 2024. Eight (8) construction projects were closed, recovering \$6.29 million in total assessed costs, of which \$3.06 million was recovered through landowner and utility assessments. Staff worked to apply and secure approximately \$640,000 in OMAFA grant applications to help offset costs for affected owners. The program continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Drainage Act across 974 km of municipal drains throughout Norfolk County.

Discussions:

As part of the 2025 Corporate restructuring, Norfolk County's Drainage Services operates under the direction of the Manager, Stormwater and Drainage within the Environmental Services team. The two (2) Drainage Superintendents are responsible for managing the program's primary service areas – construction, maintenance, and improvements of drains under the authority of the *Drainage Act* – within but not limited to their respective jurisdictions. Drainage staff, and their combined resources provide efficient scheduling, coordination, and delivery of services across the municipality.

Council has delegated authority to the Drainage Superintendents to administer and oversee all municipal activities governed by the *Drainage Act*. This includes the responsibility for the administrative and operational requirements associated with new drainage construction projects, as well as the maintenance and repair of existing drains and associated infrastructure. Drainage Superintendents' salary, benefits and equipment are not eligible costs to drain maintenance or construction projects but are eligible for an annual Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) Grant. In 2025, Norfolk County was able to recover approximately \$78,000 in Superintendent costs. With the second Drainage Superintendent Position being vacant for most of 2025, this amount is expected to nearly double for 2026.

The Drainage Program Coordinator is responsible for securing required permits and approvals for municipal drain work and ensuring compliance with agency monitoring and reporting. The role also reviews and adjusts work plans where feasible to minimize permitting needs and improve project efficiency. Failure to obtain required approvals exposes the municipality and supervising staff to significant regulatory fines and renders projects ineligible for OMAFA grant funding. In addition, the position completes drain asset inspections, condition assessments, supports invasive species management, municipal drain buffer restoration, drain classification through sampling and the pursuit of applicable funding opportunities for affected owners. The Drainage Coordinators time while working on drains is an applicable maintenance cost and recovered through annual drain maintenance grants and billing. In 2025, staff were able to recover approximately \$14,500 in staff time.

The Drainage Clerk provides statutory, financial, and administrative support for Municipal Drainage Services in accordance with the *Drainage Act* under the delegated authority of the County Clerk. The position serves as the primary contact for drainage inquiries, manages operational documents and records, and processes materials related to drain maintenance and construction projects, grants, billing, tenders, agreements, and by-laws. The role also coordinates the *Drainage Act* regulated appeal processes and administratively supports the Drainage Superintendents and Drainage Operators. Work performed by the Drainage Clerk is not eligible for OMAFA Grants.

The Drainage Operators are responsible for carrying out field operations required to maintain and repair municipal drainage infrastructure in accordance with the *Drainage Act*. This role includes operating and maintaining equipment used for drain maintenance and construction, performing routine inspections, clearing obstructions, and completing minor repairs to ensure proper function of Municipal Drains. The Drainage Operator supports the implementation of scheduled maintenance programs, service request delivery, emergency response activities, while adhering to safety, environmental, and regulatory requirements. The position also assists with site preparation, materials, supplies and service requisitions, site restoration and documentation of work completed. Drainage Operator time and equipment while working on drains is an applicable maintenance cost and recovered through annual drain maintenance grants and billing. In 2025, staff were able to recover approximately \$29,000 in equipment, and \$175,000 in staff costs.

A map outlining names and locations of Norfolk County’s municipal drains can be found in Attachment 1.

Context:

The key function for the Municipal Drainage team is to facilitate and complete the requirements of the County under Section 93/3 – Duties of Drainage Superintendent under the *Drainage Act*.

Main areas of responsibility for the Municipal Drainage Team include:

1. Inspecting every drainage works for which the municipality is responsible for and reporting to council on conditions;
2. Initiate and supervise the maintenance and repair of the drainage works for which the municipality is responsible for; and
3. Assist in the construction or improvement of drainage works the municipality is responsible for.

Information relating to the work completed within these areas of responsibility has been provided in the sections below.

Construction of Municipal Drains

The Adopted 2026 Levy Capital Budget included a total allocation of \$1,625,000 for the Drainage Engineering and Construction program. Funding for this program is recovered through assessments to affected property owners, roads, utilities, and applicable ministry grants. As individual projects are presented to Council, the adoption of the corresponding drainage report establishes the estimated project cost, at which time a project specific budget can be allocated or a dedicated capital project created.

Notably, projects closed or billed in 2025 represent nearly a three (3)-fold increase over 2024 (\$6.29M vs \$2.41M), illustrating significant progress by the Drainage and Financial Services Teams working on these files.

Table 1 below provides high level statistics on types of municipal drain construction:

Table 1: Construction Statistics

	2024		2025	
	# Projects	\$ Amount	# Projects	\$ Amount
Projects Open; with Costs	38	\$9.25M	31	\$4.10M
Projects Open; No Costs	6	\$0	4	\$0
Report to Hires (New Projects)	2	\$30K	0	\$0
Projects Closed or Billed	10	\$2.41M	8	\$6.29M

Of the municipal drain construction projects that were closed or billed in 2025, \$2.81 million was assessed to Norfolk County, \$420,000 was funded through OMAFA grants, and \$3.06 million was recovered through landowner and utility assessments.

It should be noted that reporting for municipal drain construction projects is not included in the County’s capital status report. As a result, this information has been provided separately in Attachment 4, which details each project that remains open and has a balance outstanding.

Drain Maintenance Program

The Drainage Superintendents oversee the maintenance of approximately 974km of municipal drains across Norfolk County. Maintenance and repair costs incurred in accordance with the *Drainage Act* and applicable by-laws are assessed to lands and roads according to each drain report.

In 2025 drainage staff completed \$900,483 in assessable maintenance work. Norfolk County applies fees to drain assessments to recover otherwise ineligible costs and in 2025, the County was able to recover approximately \$65,000 in fees. Applicable grants and assessment distributions are summarized in the accompanying table.

Table 2: Maintenance Statistics

	2024	2025	2026 Estimate
Scheduled Work Orders	109	81	130
Non-scheduled Work Orders	218	204	220
Permits Applied For	49	45	50
Grant Applied For	\$209,716	\$217,367	\$225,000
Roll Number Assessments	\$560,292	\$638,535	\$640,000
Norfolk County Assessments	\$191,598	\$261,948	\$260,000
Total Assessments Billed	\$751,890	\$900,483	\$868,000

Municipalities are legally obligated under the *Drainage Act* to maintain municipal drains in accordance with specifications outlined in the approved engineer’s reports adopted under the by-law. The engineer’s report establishes the design, capacity, and required maintenance standards for the drain, and the municipality is responsible for ensuring the drain continues to function as intended through regular inspection, maintenance and repair. Failure to maintain a municipal drain to these standards can expose the municipality to liability for damages either from negligence or failing to meet statutory duties under the *Drainage Act*.

As a result, the scheduled maintenance program and timely response to service requests and inspections are essential risk management practices for the municipality. This year in 2026, the Drainage team is scheduling maintenance of 124km of municipal drains with an estimated total billing of \$868,000. This planned work represents an ambitious but proactive effort to meet the Municipality’s obligations under the *Drainage*

Act. Maps that outline Norfolk County's drain maintenance program can be found in Attachment 2 and 3.

Finance Comments:

The Drainage Status Report (DSR) is provided in Attachment 4.

Attachment 4 includes 34 projects with a total approved budget of \$8.5 million to date. Of this amount, \$3.9 million is expected to be funded by the County, while the remaining amount is expected to be recovered through assessments to landowners. However, 10 of the projects included in the DSR do not yet have capital budgets that have been established, likely due to not being in receipt of an engineer report yet and may increase the County's future expected costs.

Interdepartmental Implications:

No direct implications result from this report.

Consultation(s):

Drainage Services continues to work closely with Finance to advance active construction projects, close out legacy projects, and ensure accurate assessment billing and grant recovery. This collaboration supports responsible stewardship of municipal drain assets while minimizing the financial burden on Norfolk County and its ratepayers.

Finance was consulted in the preparation of this report.

Strategic Plan Linkage:

Building Norfolk - Develop the infrastructure and supports needed to ensure complete communities

Serving Norfolk - ensuring a fiscally responsible organization with engaged employees who value excellent service

Sustaining Norfolk - Creating a sustainable community and a positive legacy

Attachment(s):

- Attachment 1 Norfolk County Municipal Drainage Map
- Attachment 2 2026 Map Drain Maintenance Program West
- Attachment 3 2026 Map Drain Maintenance Program East
- Attachment 4 2026 Drainage Capital Status Report

Approval:

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