

Let's Talk About...

Cease the Grease

It has been two and a half years since the Hamilton Herald News ran a front-page story about the impact of grease on our city's sewage system.

It has been one year and a half since I wrote an article for this column about the same topic.

Unfortunately, little has changed. Every day, grease goes into our sewer system. Every day, that grease builds up until it causes a clog with a resulting overflow or burst pipe. Every day, that grease makes its way to the sewage treatment plant, where it destroys pumps, floats and filters.

In short, every day, that grease costs you money.

Unlike so many of our costly and complex problems, this solution is simple – stop the grease. Each and every one of us has the ability to be part of the solution, simply by making good decisions about what goes into our sinks and toilets.

While the amount of grease that each individual household contributes to this problem may seem small, multiply that amount by 1400 households daily and you'll get an idea of the scope of the problem.

It's easy to be unaware of the grease we're putting into the system. Sometimes it is obvious, like cooking oils and the fats from meat products. Sometimes it hides in products like ketchup, mayonnaise and salad dressings. In the bathroom, grease, fats and oils lurk in beauty products. All of these need to be scraped and wiped into a garbage can, not flushed down a sink with hot water.

For commercial establishments the city implemented a grease trap program in late 2018, but it lacked a mechanism for determining the exact amount of fats, oils and grease contributed by each individual business. Those existing regulations were being studied and enhanced earlier this year just as COVID-19 struck. With our businesses already suffering economic hardships, it was decided to delay implementation of a strengthened testing and surcharge program. However, this also delays the city's ability to detect and eliminate commercial violators.

Even if you do not really care about the city's sewer system, remember this: It may not be a city line that clogs. It may be your personal line from your house to the sewer main. Just a short time without being able to flush the toilet, run the dish or clothes washer, take a shower or wash your hands will alert you to the importance of not sending that bacon grease down the kitchen sink. Plus, clearing that clog will cost you money, just as every clog costs the city money. We would all like to see that money used somewhere else.

You can make a difference, if you are willing to.