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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

" Lots of times you have to pretend to join a parade in which you're not really interested in order to get where you're going. "

Christopher

## Water, sewer system needs major fix-up

Upgrade will cost \$600 million, take 25 years, report says  
By MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE City Hall Reporter

Metro's municipal officials are considering ways to handle a serious infrastructure problem that will take \$600 million over the next 25 years to fix.

A staff briefing delivered Tuesday during regional council's committee of the whole session included ways to tackle Halifax Regional Municipality's aging storm water and sewage pipe systems. The systems "are in a critical state of disrepair" a city hall report says, and are in need of "immediate and costly repairs."

The municipality is exploring ways to find money — some \$24 million per year — needed for work on metro's sewage and drainage systems.

Brad Anguish, the city's director of environmental management services, said part of the infrastructure crisis can be traced to inflexible financial reserves that the municipality has set up. He said current policy prevents municipal staff from getting money it needs to upgrade underground pipes that are decades old and not doing their job.

"Our financial tools — or our reserves — are not really set up to deal with . . . a minimal amount of money that we now find ourselves with," Mr. Anguish told council. "There just isn't that flexibility to move (funds) and (spend) on those things that require expenditures."

A city hall document presented at Tuesday's meeting suggests the politicians change the fiscal arrangement "by collapsing current reserve structures, and associated bylaws, to the maximum extent possible."

Part of the debate Tuesday focused on new developments in metro and their impact on sewage treatment plants. While a couple of councillors who addressed the issue said they weren't "anti-development," the meeting heard developers could one day be directed by the municipality to pay for upgrading or expanding the plants.

But the meeting was also told if that ever happens, that cost would just be passed along to consumers buying a developer's lots or new homes.

"These developments are going to impact on the new sewage treatment plant in Halifax (and) they're going to impact on the existing sewage treatment plant . . . in Bedford," said Coun. Len Goucher (Bedford). "Why should they not be possibly be paying toward that" potential upgrading or expansion, he asked.

Mayor Peter Kelly hinted the city's sewer cash crunch means developers might be dinged in the future.

"The development community knows that we're at increased cost pressures," he said. "They can't expect a free ride anymore."

Darlington Morley

Dan English, chief administrative officer for the municipality, warned regional council that any effort to start charging developers for the impact their projects might have on municipal sewage plants would result in intense lobbying by the development industry.

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