

From: [Abraham Zebian](#)
To: Keith Aucoin
Cc: [Mark Phillips](#); Peter Moore; Alicia Hennessey; Amanda Dunfield; Heather Brown; [Bob Morton](#); [Debbie Francis](#); [Ed Sherman](#); [Jeff Hartt](#); [Jim Ivey](#); [John Smith](#); [Laurie Murley](#); [Mark McLean](#); [Paul Morton](#); [Rupert Jannasch](#); [Scott McLean](#); [Deanna Snair](#)
Subject: Re: Stannus St. CSO Issue
Date: October 3, 2024 11:11:57 PM
Attachments: [2024 Oct. 2-2A-- Memo to Mayor Zebian, -CSO-.doc](#)

On Oct 3, 2024, at 9:30 PM, Keith Aucoin wrote:

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Mayor Zebian.

Attached is a follow-up memo I recently drafted regarding the Windsor CSO issues following Council's discussion at your September 26th carry-over Council meeting. Finally, it was encouraging to hear the council discussion about the proposed "Residential Property Buy-out" policy regarding the CSO situation on Stannus Street. However, I didn't detect a sense of urgency throughout the discussion of the policy, hence the reason for this memo.

I must stress that Council's progress on this serious matter is quite troublesome and the tone and seriousness we are hearing from the staff and some Councilors is causing serious frustration and anxiety. This has been prolonged unnecessarily for 3+ years and the trauma that has been

inflicted on the lives of our local residents during that time has been inexcusable.

As I noted in my earlier correspondence, I feel strongly it's long past time to do the right thing and time is surely of the essence. This may be a challenging issue but a solution is needed urgently.

*Regards,
Keith AuCoin*

To: Abraham Zebian, Mayor, West Hants Regional Municipality
From: Keith P. AuCoin
Subject: Windsor CSO Issues and Solutions
Date: October 2, 2024

Mayor Zebian.

I was one of several Stannus Street residents who were present at the Sept. 26 Council meeting and I was pleased that Council finally took the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of the draft policy on “Residential Property Buy-out”, pertaining specifically to the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) situation on Stannus Street. While it was comforting to see almost all of Council participating in the discussion of many of the draft clauses, it was obvious that some members were not fully apprised on the seriousness of the flooding and the trauma experienced by the local residents. This memo should help bring them up to speed.

As I listened to the thoughts of the Councilors and the CAO about what should be included in the policy, some of the limitations that were being suggested, as well as the timelines being offered, gave cause for concern. I feel that the local residents really should have input into the discussion before final decisions were made on the approval of the policy. Accordingly, I recommend that a special group meeting of Councilors and residents should be held sooner than later. Although you and 3 of your councilors saw first-hand the surface devastation experienced by the affected residents on July 11, 2024, the hidden trauma, the ruination inside the homes and the very serious health hazards endured with each flood are not fully understood by all Councilors. As was suggested in my memo of August 4, 2024, this buy-out and relocation initiative is clearly being done not at the choosing of the local residents. These families were happy to move to Stannus Street and had there been no CSO intrusion, they would have been more than willing to stay. In years past, the Municipality has made some serious errors of judgement in several aspects of managing the local discharge infrastructure and ultimately it is now responsible for the CSO situation. However, because of the nature of the buy-out initiative, the local residents should be equal partners with the Municipality in reaching the decisions on how their lives can be restructured from this life altering experience.

Considering the results of the first property assessments on all of the affected homes as of this date, it appears that the market value of the affected homes was determined to be in the range of \$300K to \$400K. Several of the local residents have been researching the housing market in West Hants for the past several months and there seems to be no comparable properties anywhere near that price range that meets the family's needs. The price range of comparable housing currently available in West Hants would seem to be in the \$450K to \$650K $\pm$ range. I've reviewed the assessment of our property with the three houses selected for comparison in this price range and it suggests very strongly that this type of evaluation process is at best a rough approximation, as well as being a very subjective exercise. These comparisons were made with properties that were upgraded and presented for display in order to increase the sale value. The affected homes on Stannus Street were not presented in this manner, as it is illogical to upgrade homes that may be demolished, and I believe that all properties would have received much higher appraisals had that occurred. In today's environment, houses are mostly sold at elevated prices because of a depleted housing market. If our houses were being sold, I suggest all the owners would have spent \$25-50K on upgrades and increased the sale value by approximately \$50-\$100K. To sell without upgrading would basically be a missed financial opportunity.

If the present appraisal price for the affected properties is accepted without adjustment, the families will have to create new mortgages of \$100-250K more than their buy-out prices in order to complete the purchase of a comparable property in West Hants. In reality, the residents may have to move outside the County to find a new home that meets their needs in their price range. One of the suggested clauses in the buy-out proposal restricts the residents to relocating in West Hants and circumstances suggest that the process may meet with failure before it's effectively used. Hence, a reasonable adjustment fee will be required to span the differential. This can be easily justified as compensation to off-set ongoing personal stress, potential very serious health hazards, disruption of and adjustments to daily life routines, and ongoing personal trauma. For example, to move away from this area would mean finding a new family Doctor, a Dentist, extra travel to work, perhaps a change in job, registering with a new drug store, a new school, a new Church, changing all communication information, developing new friends and a variety of other services for each family. For some, this is like starting a new life. For others, there isn't a lot of time to make all these adjustments.

Some of the other issues that should be discussed with the residents as a group are – a reasonable time frame to complete the relocation, consideration of tax adjustment for a period of time, moving costs, realtor fees, legal fees, potential increases in insurance premiums, etc. Financials spent to date for repairs and/or replacement of damaged or lost items should also be part of the compensation package. As well, it is being suggested that the individuals spend tens of thousands of dollars of their own money to pay for the transition services and then provide receipts to the municipality for reimbursement. This needs to be discussed as a measure of fairness.

I reviewed the draft policy prior to the meeting and had a second look recently. I will forward a separate piece pertaining to some items I feel should be reworded and a few thoughts about additional clauses for consideration.

Again, I would suggest that time is of the essence and this should be a top priority for Council and staff. I realize this is a busy time for Councilors but the necessities of the Stannus Street situation should take priority.

With sincere appreciation,

Yours truly,

Keith P. AuCoin

CC. -West Hants Municipal Councillors
 -Mark Phillips, CAO
 -Stannus St. residents