



June 2009 Newsletter

Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart

Diane with Minister Blackett, Mayor Bronconnier and Members of Council at the welcoming reception for other municipalities to the Coalition of Canadian Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (March 2009).

Only Rain Down the Storm Drain

Stormwater and wastewater are two different things, and travel different routes back to the river.

Wastewater is water from indoor taps and toilets. It goes down the drains inside your home to the treatment plant, where it is cleaned before returning to the river.

Stormwater, or runoff, is water that goes from your property down the street. This stormwater eventually travels into our creeks and rivers.

Every time it rains or snow melts, streets, driveways, parking lots and your lawn get a bath. The storm drainage system is a network of drains, pipes and ponds designed to channel storm water directly to our rivers.

Dirt, oil, gasoline, gravel, salt, garbage, animal waste and chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides are washed away into the storm sewers. The last stop for stormwater is through outfalls – the big drains you see along the riverbanks – and into our waterways that aquatic wildlife call home.

Our rivers provide a source of clean drinking water as well as home to wildlife. Our everyday activities can have a big impact. The City of Calgary's Drainage Bylaw helps us manage and control the substances and materials that enter the drainage system and does have a positive impact on the quality and quantity of stormwater entering our rivers.

Flooding

Flooding can strike any Calgary community in any season, often with little or no warning. The impact can be minor or devastating. City-wide heavy rains, such as those seen in June 2005, show how widespread flooding can be.

Historically river floods occur in the late May to early June period although there are a few incidents both before and after this timeframe.

The Bow River's source of water is the Bow Glacier in the Rocky Mountains. The Bow River's watershed contains 7,770 square kilometers of contributing waterways that drain into the Bow.

The Elbow River originates in Elbow Lake and has a watershed of 1,210 square kilometers.

When the winter snow melts, much of that water ends up in the rivers. Combined with heavy rainfall, the additional water in the rivers can result in flooding.

Flooding can happen anytime anywhere. Flooding can happen in one or all of these ways:

- Basement seepage
- Sewage backup
- Stormwater backup
- Overland flooding

The City of Calgary is prepared for flooding year round:

- By working with Alberta Environment to monitor snow pack, rainfall and temperatures, as well as stream-flow gauges in the mountains and foothills.
- By developing and maintaining emergency plans.
- By conducting training sessions for emergency personnel.
- By indentifying those areas of the city and pieces of critical infrastructure that are most vulnerable to flooding.
- By ensuring emergency resources are in place.

The City strives to maintain all critical business functions and services to Calgarians during any emergency or disaster. Calgary is one of the first municipalities in Canada to have dedicated Emergency Water Operations Centre (H2OC) that is used as a central hub for the flow of information and communications during any flood event.

Being prepared is your best line of defense against floods. You can get your copy of *Before, During and After Flooding in Calgary – Your Guide to Protecting Family and Property* at www.calgary.ca or by calling 3-1-1.

As always, you can contact my office regarding this or any other civic matter at 268-1624, by email at dcolley@calgary.ca. Alternatively, you can contact '311.'