

Attachment-3

2025 Water Efficiency Strategy Progress Report



Environmental Services Department

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Background

Water servicing capacity reclaimed through conservation and efficiency continues to be a priority in achieving a sustainable and cost-effective community water supply. The 2014 Council-approved Water Supply Master Plan (WSMP) established a reduction target of 9,147 cubic metres in average daily production by 2038 to guide the City's water efficiency programming. In 2016, the Council-approved Water Efficiency Strategy (WES) defined programs, policies and resources necessary to help the City meet the 2014 WSMP reduction targets.

In 2022, Council endorsed an updated WSMP that will inform an update to the WES. The successor strategy to the WES is currently in development - The Blueprint: Guelph's One Water Plan (The Blueprint). The Blueprint is Guelph's first integrated water management strategy, and represents a holistic, sustainable approach to managing Guelph's water resources. Recognizing the interconnectedness of drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater, The Blueprint will view and treat all forms of water as part of a single, integrated system. This initiative is rooted in deep respect for Indigenous knowledge, wisdom, and stewardship traditions, emphasizing reciprocity and care. The Blueprint is anticipated to be completed in 2026. For more information, visit [The Blueprint's website](#).

The following sections outline the water efficiency and optimization goals achieved from the WES between January 1 and December 31, 2025.

Water Reduction Target Progress

Building off the data analysis completed for the 2014 WSMP, the WES identified a ten-year water savings goal of 6,265 cubic metres per day between 2017 and 2026. The Strategy anticipated significant supply capacity to be reclaimed through water loss management and efficiencies realized within the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors.

Based on community uptake and participation in direct-savings water efficiency programs, the total water savings achieved for 2025 was 269 cubic metres per day; the 2026 goal was 716 cubic metres per day. Since the implementation of the 2016 WES, the cumulative water savings achieved to date is 2,738 cubic metres per day (2017-2025). Indirect savings are also achieved through reclaimed loss due to leaks (infrastructure and private side), adherence to the City's Outdoor Water Use and Healthy Landscape Programs, as well as through improving community awareness through educational programming.

Based on reductions in energy needed for water treatment and distribution, it is anticipated that 6.43 tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and more than \$9,620 in energy costs will be avoided through this year's water savings, year-over-year. The methodology used in the WES was established by Facilities and Energy Management – Energy and Climate Change to ensure consistency.

Figure 1 presents the daily average volumetric production values as projected in the 2014 WSMP, 2016 WES, and actual production. Despite a 9% increase in production from 2024 (16,611,474 m³ total) to 2025 (18,030,005 m³ total), the City continues to experience lower average daily production volumes than those projected through the WSMP. This is due, in part, to the successful implementation of the 2016 WES.

Figure 1: Water Supply Master Plan (2014), Water Efficiency Strategy (2016) and Actual (2013-2025) Production

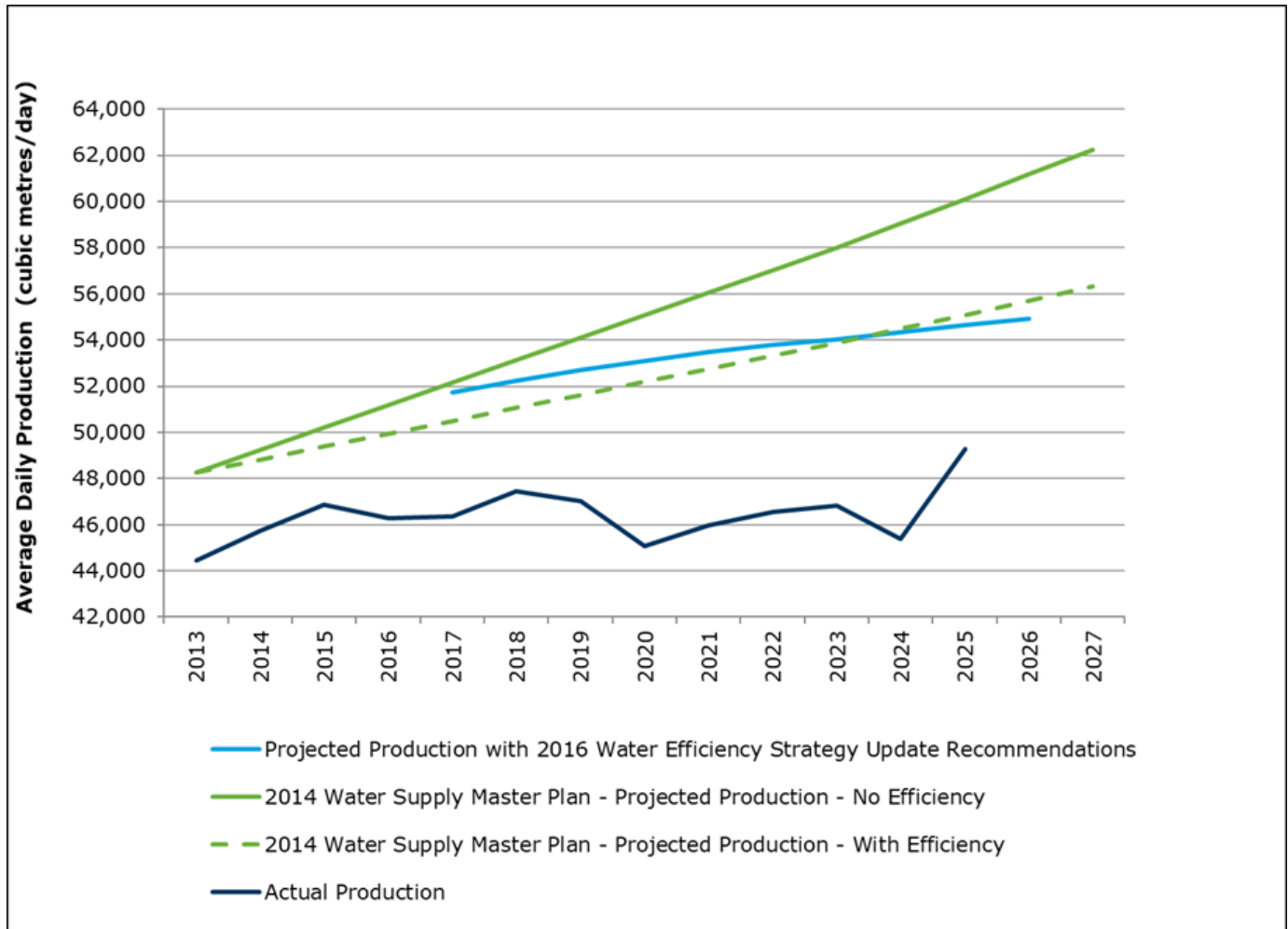
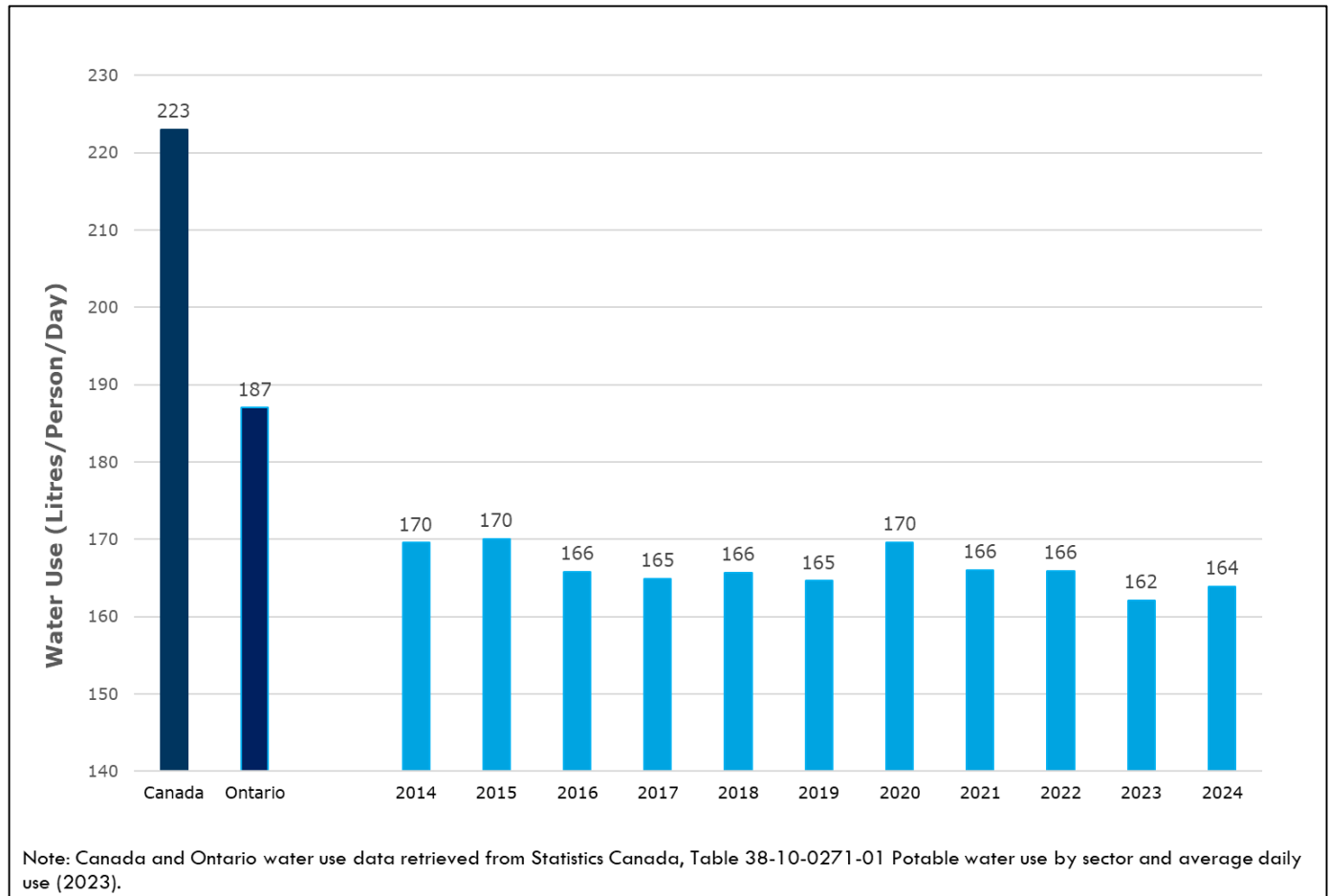


Figure 2 presents the City of Guelph's average residential water use between 2014 and 2024, calculated using the volumetric water consumption of all residential properties – low, medium and high density. The City of Guelph's residential water use was largely declining from 2014 to 2019 at an approximate rate of 3.1 litres less per person per day. Despite water use increasing in 2020 during the COVID pandemic, values have continued to decrease to 164 litres per person per day (2024), the same as in 2019 pre-pandemic. Despite a growing population, Guelph continues to remain below provincial and national

averages of 187 and 223 litres per person per day. Consumption values are not yet available so cannot be reported to year-end 2025.

Figure 2: Average Residential Water Use 2014-2024



The following sections outline Guelph’s individual water program successes for 2025, as identified in the 2026 WES.

Water Efficiency Incentive and Rebate Programs

During 2025, participation in direct water savings programs achieved an estimated savings of 269 cubic metres per day. These savings fell approximately 62 per cent short of the annual projected target (716 cubic metres per day). Hurdles to achieving the projected annual target include lower-than-estimated program uptake, program targets that have proven to be unrealistic and some promotional staff transitions and gaps. For the period of 2017 to 2025 an estimated combined water savings of 2,739 cubic metres per day has been achieved.

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In 2025, 509 rebate applications and audits were completed through the City's residential rebate programs. An additional four business and three City facility upgrades and/or audits were implemented. A full summary of direct water saving program participation rates and associated water savings is provided in Table 1. For more information on the individual water efficiency programs available, visit guelph.ca/rebates.

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Table 1: Water Efficiency Strategy Update Program Progress

Water Efficiency Program	WES Target, 2025 Average Daily Water Savings (m³/day)	Achieved Average Daily Water Savings (m³/day), 2025	Number of Rebates/Audits, 2025	WES Combined Target, 2017-2025: Average Daily Water Savings (m³/day)	Achieved Average Daily Water Savings (m³/day), 2017-2025	Number of Rebates/Audits, 2017-2025
Royal Flush	14	12.61	330	198	196.80	5,077
Blue Built Home	1	0.05	1	14	12.96	50
Home Visit/Audit	0	7.22	169	65	45.06	1,215
Multi-Residential Audit	3	16.01	9	73	135.72	57
Residential Sub-Water Meter	1	0	0	10	9.25	27
Water Smart Business	150	67.37	4	1,350	240.69	20
Municipal Facility Upgrades	22	0.73	3	198	58.25	19
Water Loss Management	525	164.80	31	3,386	2,039.25	199
Totals	716	268.79	547	5,294	2,737.98	6,664

Direct Water Savings Programs

Residential Sector

Individual residential sector program details can be found in the [2016 Water Efficiency Strategy](#) section 13.1.1.1. The following is a 2025 summary of relevant updates, program achievements and challenges.

Royal Flush Toilet Rebate Program

The 2016 WES recommended continuing with this rebate program to replace older, inefficient toilets. In 2025 there were 218 rebates processed for a total of 330 toilets. The program was promoted during home water audits, through social media campaigns, at store locations and outreach events. **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.**

Blue Built Home Water Efficiency Standards and Rebate Program

The 2016 WES identified the [Blue Built Home](#) Program to reduce indoor water demand through the installation of water saving fixtures and appliances in both existing and new homes and multi-residential buildings. In 2025, 26 single family homes received Blue Built Home certification. All but one of these homes met the certification requirements without having to make any adjustments to water fixtures or appliances and were awarded certifications to acknowledge their water efficiency leadership. The program was promoted through direct email follow-up to participants of home water audits, conversations at outreach events, web advertisements and on social media.

All-Season Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program

The All-Season [Rainwater Harvesting Rebate](#) program seeks to encourage the capture and use of rainwater to reduce demands on drinking water supply for non-potable uses in a home or business (e.g., toilet flushing). This program was promoted through web advertisements and at outreach events, but no rebates were processed in 2025.

Water Use Home Visit and Audit Program

In 2025, the City contracted Reep Green Solutions to conduct in-home water audits as part of the [Water Use Home Visit and Audit](#) Program. A total of 169 home audits were completed, representing a total water savings of 7.22 cubic metres per day. As outlined in the WES, there is an assumed 43 litre reduction in daily water use following an audit from identifying inefficient water-using fixtures such as showerheads, faucets and toilets, fixing leaks and recommending behavioural changes to reduce water use.

Multi-Residential Sector

Individual multi-residential sector programs are detailed in the 2016 Water Efficiency Strategy section 13.1.1.2. The following is a summary of 2025 relevant updates, program achievements and challenges.

Multi-Residential Audit Program

In 2025, the City contracted Reep Green Solutions to conduct detailed water audits of multi-residential buildings. A total of nine buildings participated in the program and received a detailed report on daily water demand patterns, presence of leaks, and potential water-saving opportunities (e.g. replacing inefficient plumbing fixtures or other water using processes like water softeners). As outlined in the WES, there is an assumed ten per cent reduction in daily water use following an audit. For 2025, this equates to 16.01 cubic metres of water per day. This provides a combined water savings of 135.72 cubic metres per day since the program launch in 2018.

Residential Sub-Water Meter Rebate Program

The Residential Sub-water Meter Rebate Program is open to single and multi-family residential sectors in the City of Guelph. There were no sub-meter rebates granted in 2025. In 2026 staff will continue to explore different ways to engage residents, landlords and multi-residential managers in the program, including targeted outreach related to additional residential dwelling units or accessory apartments.

Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Sector

Industrial, commercial and institutional sector programs are detailed in the 2016 Water Efficiency Strategy section 13.1.1.3. The following is a summary of 2025 relevant updates, program achievements and challenges.

Water Smart Business Program

The Water Smart Business Program continues to offer resources to help the industrial, commercial and institutional sectors lower their water use. In 2025 staff developed a robust outreach plan that included visiting the top 100 billed water customers in Guelph. Program outreach included a virtual speaker event titled From Leaks to Liability: Managing Water, Waste and Risk; 19 people participated, including representatives from three of Guelph's property managers (Granite Homes, Skyline Group of Companies, and The County of Wellington).

In 2025, four businesses participated in the program, three of which completed projects that resulted in direct savings of 67.37 cubic metres of water per day. One business completed an audit that identified water savings projects totalling 1.5 cubic metres of water per day. Two businesses completed application forms and are anticipated to participate in the program in 2026.

Municipal Operations

Details of municipal operation initiatives can be found in the [2016 Water Efficiency Strategy](#) section 13.1.1.4. The following is a 2025 summary of relevant updates, program achievements and challenges.

Municipal Facility Water Efficiency Upgrades

The City continues to lead by example with water efficiency in its own facilities. Washrooms at three facilities (Fire Department Headquarters, Fire Hall #4, and Fire Hall #5) were retrofitted with WaterSense certified fixtures (showerheads and aerators). This resulted in 0.72 cubic metres of water saved per day. Additionally, the City actively repaired leaking infrastructure in line with best practices.

Water Loss Management Program

Water Loss Strategy

The implementation of [Guelph's Water Loss Strategy](#) continued in 2025. The City's work to date in minimizing non-revenue water has shown continuous improvement. A 2020 consultant's review indicated that if the City wants to further reduce non-revenue water and have its efforts remain cost effective, an additional expenditure between \$97,000 to \$116,000 per year should not be exceeded. This may be further explored through The Blueprint.

Leak Detection Program

The City's [leak detection](#) program started in the spring of 2011 and aims to reduce the amount of water lost between the point of treatment and delivery to customers. The [2025 Leak Detection](#) Program included sounding and correlation of all watermains within the City's distribution system. In total, 41 possible leaks were identified through this survey; 31 were confirmed and repaired (25 hydrant leaks and six main or service leaks). The average daily volume of servicing capacity reclaimed through the location and remediation of these leaks equates to approximately 164.8 cubic metres per day in 2025. The reduction in water savings reflects a successful water loss management program and the need for fewer excavations to manage significant leaks. Savings attributed to reclaimed water supply capacity (production) are summarized in Table 1.

Indirect Water Savings Programs

Education is a fundamentally important tool to engage and motivate action. The commitment to increasing local water literacy is a complimentary piece to changing toilets, completing water audits, and installing water meters, etc. that is necessary to ensure wise resource use. The City continues to offer a variety of successful programs to increase community awareness about the value and significance of Guelph's water supply, the City's adoption of best management practices, and how to use drinking water responsibly. Such outreach can influence water consumption

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attitudes and behaviours. Investment in a sustainable water future for Guelph includes education and outreach programming.

A summary of the individual indirect water savings programs can be found in the [2016 Water Efficiency Strategy](#) section 13.1.2. The following is a 2025 summary of relevant updates, program achievements and challenges.

Peak Season Water Demand Management Initiatives

Reduction of peak season (summer) water demand continues to be a primary objective of the City's water efficiency programming. The ability to reduce or minimize variations in seasonal water use limits the impact on finite groundwater supply during times of environmental stress and creates operational efficiencies. Outside water use initiatives that result in indirect savings are detailed in the [2016 Water Efficiency Strategy](#) section 13.1.2.1.

Outside Water Use Program

This program is driven by the City's Outside Water Use Bylaw, which restricts certain outdoor water-using activities during peak demand, when conditions such as dry, hot weather and reduced river flows warrant restrictions.

The [Outside Water Use Program](#) (OWUP) is in effect all year, but conditions are only monitored between April and October. The OWUP went through four level changes this season.

- Level 0 Blue to Level 1 Yellow: July 3
- Level 1 Yellow to Level 2 Red: August 13
- Level 2 Red to Level 1 Yellow: September 10
- Level 1 Yellow to Level 0 Blue: October 13

Internal and public condition reports were distributed weekly via email and on the website.

Residents were notified of the current water level and corresponding restrictions through media advertisements including:

- Radio ads: 1460CJOY and Magic 106
- Screenscapes
- Google ads
- Guelph Today rotating ads
- Social media
- Large outdoor water use signs in all wards
- Webpage
- Media release accompanying a level change

Permits were issued through the season and no permits were suspended. In 2025, 169 permits were issued:

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- 82 new lawn watering permits;
- 27 treated lawn watering permits;
- 60 time shift permits.

Healthy Landscapes Program

The Healthy Landscapes Program continues to offer resources to residents on landscape management tools and techniques that result in desired yard aesthetics and reduced impact on water resources.

The annual speaker series featured two virtual and three in-person talks on outdoor water conservation topics from tree care to growing vegetables and garden design. There were over 820 participants in the 2025 speaker series, and a further 150 participants in the three-part Landscape Design Course.

Healthy Landscape visits continued to be a popular resource, with 400 free one-hour visits completed in 2025. Visits covered topics ranging from replacing lawns with gardens, water efficient lawn care tips and general water-saving landscaping advice. For more information, visit the [Healthy Landscapes Program website](#).

The annual rain barrel sale was offered again as an online ordering and delivery service. In partnership with Stormwater Engineering, 600 rain barrels were sold to Guelph residents in 2025. An additional 20 rain barrels were purchased and distributed to City facilities and community gardens. Rain barrels capture rainwater for reuse in gardens and assist in managing pressure on stormwater infrastructure during rain events.

Public Outreach and Education Programs

Public outreach and education program initiatives are detailed in the 2016 Water Efficiency Strategy section 13.1.2.2. The following is a 2025 summary of relevant updates, program achievements or challenges.

Curriculum-Linked Education Programming

School presentations: The City continues to support Grade 2 and Grade 8 water and wastewater education programs (including source protection messaging). In 2025, 16 school presentations were delivered, engaging 485 students. Fewer presentations in 2025 is largely in part to staffing gaps and transitions.

Facility tours: Guided tours of the F.M. Woods Water Treatment Plant and the Water Resource Recovery Centre (WRRC) provide students the opportunity to see first-hand where their water comes from and what happens when it goes down the drain. In 2025, all guided tours of F.M. Woods were on hold due to on-site construction. Tours typically delivered each year by the Grand River Conservation Authority of F.M. Woods and the WRRC were also on hold. In 2025, City staff delivered five wastewater facility tours, engaging 96 students.

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Guest speaker events: Staff collaborated with local school boards to deliver the H2Awesome Conference for students in Grades 6 to 8. Nine guest speaker sessions were planned between World Water Day (March 22) and Earth Day (April 22) on water and wastewater topics. This virtual event engaged over 1,594 students.

Waterloo-Wellington Children's Groundwater Festival: While the City has been a longtime supporter of the Festival, 2025 was the first year that funding from the City was organized through a Community Benefit Agreement. In 2025 the festival was held at the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum. Over five-days, 4,594 elementary students were engaged, with 1,074 students from the Upper Grand District School Board and 316 students from the Wellington Catholic District School Board. Activity stations covered a variety of topics from water and wastewater treatment to source water protection and conservation. A virtual option of the festival was also offered so students and teachers could participate remotely; 425 students registered.

Public Outreach Events

Fix-A-Leak Week: A series of in-person outreach events were organized to engage the public in discussions about household leaks and indoor water conservation. Staff connected with about 55 people at hardware stores throughout the City. Toilet leak detection tabs and conservation-related promotional material were distributed, and residents were encouraged to book a free home water audit. In addition, approximately 100 contractors and builders were reached at a networking event at the Arboretum and informed about Guelph's water rebate programs.

Public Works Week Open House: On May 24, the public had the opportunity to learn more about the City's water and wastewater services through interactive displays and conversations. An estimated 2,000 people attended the event and engaged with educational displays related to water topics, including metering, locates, source water protection, water treatment and distribution, water conservation and drinking water promotion.

EcoMarket: This annual event attracts people from all over Guelph who are looking for ways to fight climate change, reduce their environmental impact and save money. Over two days, staff engaged in meaningful conversations about the City's water, wastewater and solid waste services with over 75 individuals.

Speaking Engagements: *Orientation to Ontario* information sessions were delivered to new residents of Guelph through a partnership with Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington. The presentations introduced approximately 30 people to the City's water, wastewater and solid waste services.

Drinking Water Promotion and the Guelph Water Wagon

In support of the City's 2009 Public Promotion Action Plan for City Drinking Water Consumption, the Guelph Water Wagon provides tap water to attendees of large, outdoor community events during the spring and summer months.

Staff attended 33 event days, providing 18,209 litres of water to the public. As a result of offering this service, over 36,418 500-millilitre-sized plastic water bottles were diverted from waste streams. Staff engaged with over 4,170 people while attending community events with the Guelph Water Wagon.

Research Programs

Outside Water Use Bylaw Review

In 2025, the city retained GEI Consultants Canada to review and update the current Outside Water Use bylaw. Typically, water demands increase during the summer months as people use more water for outdoor activities like car washing, lawn and garden watering, and filling swimming pools. In 2003, City Council approved the first Outside Water Use Bylaw to help manage periods of low water supply and high water use. The bylaw was also a necessary step for the City to meet Provincial requirements for water management outlined in [Ontario's Low Water Response Plan](#).

During prolonged periods of drought in 2012, the City grappled with an out-of-date bylaw and it was updated in 2014. Another bylaw update is required as staff were tasked to define the parameters for a Level III-Black trigger. This timing also aligns with the requirement to provide a drought response plan forming a portion of the City's Source Water Protection Plan Water Quantity policies. The new bylaw is currently undergoing research and development and is anticipated to be in place for the spring of 2026.

Environmental Programs Framework

In 2023, the City contracted KPMG to develop an Environmental Programs Framework (EPF) that would provide clear direction for enhancing collaboration and synergies across all program communications and operations. The goal being to improve collective performance and account for all programs delivered by Environmental Programs staff across the disciplines of water efficiency, source water protection, tap water promotion, wastewater and solid waste. The EPF was completed in 2024 and provides a tool to assess the value, efficacy, reach, and tracking across each program. In 2025 staff used the EPF to review and map all programs. This work helped inform the Blueprint and enhanced collaboration and efficiencies across the Environmental Programs team. Several opportunities for improvement were identified, and many have already been implemented. One example came from collaborating with Communications staff in 2025 to develop and implement an Integrated Communications Plan for Environmental Programs. This

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led to more stacked messaging to increase public engagement and created a more efficient workflow process for both teams.