

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 14, 2026

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: STANDING WATER BY-LAW REVIEW

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

Staff propose repealing the Standing Water By-law and replacing it with a new by-law that creates administrative penalties, clarifies enforcement actions that can be taken and reduces the amount of time granted to property owners to clear standing water. The intent of the proposed regulatory changes is to better enable the City of Vaughan (the City) to reduce mosquito breeding areas that can in turn provide breeding grounds for various types of water-borne illnesses.

Report Highlights

- To repeal and replace the Standing Water By-law with a new by-law that imposes administrative penalties for non-compliance, updates enforcement provisions, and changes the amount of time a person has to clear out standing water.

Recommendations

1. That Council authorize the repeal and replacement of Standing Water By-law 142-2023, as amended, substantially in accordance with Table 1 in the Analysis and Options section, in a form satisfactory to the Office of the City Solicitor.

Background

Stagnant water can be a dangerous breeding ground for disease

As explained by the World Health Organization, stagnant or 'standing' water can contribute to a number of serious infectious diseases, as it is an attractive breeding

ground for mosquitoes and various organisms that transmit diseases, which in this case, happens when a mosquito bites someone. [1] Examples of infectious diseases that can be transmitted by mosquitoes include Chikungunya, Dengue Fever, Encephalitis, Malaria, West Nile and the Yellow Fever. [2] As well, there are a number of pathogens known to breed well in stagnant water, such as typhoid, dysentery, and cholera. [1] Although most of those diseases are not common in this part of the world, although the Regional Municipality of York monitors disease outbreaks and confirms that there have been confirmed cases of the West Nile virus in the region, with 8 cases in the City in 2025. [5]

Mosquitoes are one of the most dangerous animals in the world

The World Health Organization estimates that vector-borne diseases kill approximately 700,000 people world-wide annually, spread mainly by mosquitoes, but also by ticks, flies, parasites, bacteria and viruses. [4]

The range of mosquitoes has been increasing in Canada

According to the organization Climate Atlas of Canada, the geographic range of mosquitoes in Canada has been expanding due to warmer temperatures combined with precipitation, increasing 10% over the last 20 years, thus putting Vaughan residents more at risk of the diseases that can be spread by mosquitoes. [3]

York Region works to monitor and eliminate insect vectors and their diseases

The Regional Municipality of York (York Region)'s Public Health Unit performs a variety of important work to monitor and prevent diseases transmitted by various insects. Although the current Standing Water By-law provides the Region's Medical Officer of Health to enforce the City's by-law, Regional staff instead conduct their work under the authority of the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7, usually based on Section 13(2), which states the following:

“A medical officer of health or a public health inspector may make an order under this section where he or she is of the opinion, upon reasonable and probable grounds,

- a) that a health hazard exists in the health unit served by him or her; and
- b) that the requirements specified in the order are necessary in order to decrease the effect of or to eliminate the health hazard. R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7, s. 13 (2).

York Region's staff perform the following activities:

- **Mosquito trapping and testing:** The Region has over 30 sites where mosquitoes are trapped, identified and tested for various mosquito transmissible diseases. This is crucial in preventing disease transmission before it happens.

- **Destroying mosquitoes and their habitats on public property:** On public property, York Region staff clear stagnant water, apply larvicides and take other measures to kill mosquitoes, ticks and other insects, working in tandem with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks who provide oversight through a permitting system.
- **Collaboration with lower-tier municipalities for private property:** For incidents on private property, the Region provides suggested actions to property owners on how to address issues, as well as collaborates with lower-tier municipalities such as Vaughan, to investigate and take action under municipal by-laws.
- **Monitoring disease outbreaks:** They also monitor disease outbreaks, such as West Nile Virus, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, and Lyme disease, which is transmitted by ticks.
- **Public information:** This and other useful information is listed on the York Region website, [Infectious Diseases and Prevention](#).

The City's Standing Water By-law helps reduce the risk of water-borne illnesses

As mentioned above, the City, like many governments around the world, has a by-law, the Standing Water By-law, which currently requires property owners to keep their properties free of depressions, excavations and debris capable of holding standard water for more than four days.

Because we know that vector-borne diseases, mainly transmitted by mosquitoes, are responsible for an estimated 700,000 deaths world-wide every year, and that the geographic range of mosquitoes in Canada has been increasing over the last 20 years, staff believe it is important to strengthen the City's ability to reduce the potential for disease transmission. Thus, in line with the Council-approved By-law Strategy, staff propose repealing and replacing the Standing Water By-law to strengthen enforcement provisions to help ensure its efficacy, including to:

- remove the four-day time period property owners have to clear standing water on their property, requiring properties to just be free from standing water, which allows any potentially serious issues to be addressed promptly;
- add an administrative penalty of \$350 for non-compliance (as an alternative to the provincial fine); and
- update the enforcement provisions in line with the current standard in new by-laws.

The intent of this new by-law is to continue to contribute to the health and safety of residents and visitors to Vaughan and strengthening the City's ability to prevent and address these health and safety concerns in a timely manner.

Previous Reports/Authority

By-laws

[Standing Water By-law 142-2003](#)

[Administrative Penalties By-law 240-2024](#)

Reports

[Council-approved By-law Strategy](#), Item 3, Report No. 3 of the Priorities and Key Initiatives Committee, adopted without amendment by Council, June 24, 2014.

Analysis and Options

In addition to general by-law conditions being added and updated, the more significant changes being proposed by staff in the new Standing Water By-law are set out below:

No	Current state	Recommendation	Reasoning
1	The current by-law allows for provincial fines, however, not municipal Administrative Penalties. In line with direction from the Regional municipality of York, City staff continue to create municipal administrative penalties in by-laws for non-criminal matters.	Staff recommend creating an administrative penalty of \$350 for non-compliance with the Standing Water By-law and amending the Administrative Penalties By-law to include the Standing Water By-law.	To provide the City with additional options to encourage compliance with the by-law.
2	The by-law was enacted in 2003, after which the by-law layout and standard enforcement and general provisions have been updated.	To repeal and replace the current by-law, updating the by-law's enforcement and general provisions in line with current by-laws.	To create greater consistency across City by-laws, contributing to ease of by-law review.
3	The current by-law allows four days to clear any standing water, however, given the seriousness of diseases transmitted by mosquitoes which breed in standing water, staff recommend eliminating this four-day period and requiring property to just be clear of standing water.	To have the new by-law require properties to be clear of standing water, with no minimum timeframe to clear the water.	To enable the City to order that standing water be cleared right away if needed, such as if there are many mosquitoes in the area, providing greater ability to address potential health and safety concerns.

No	Current state	Recommendation	Reasoning
4	The current Standing Water By-law, enacted in 2003, currently gives York Region’s Medical Officer of Health to authority to enforce the by-law; however, City staff have confirmed with York Region’s Public Health Unit that they do not use the City’s By-law, and instead, apply the Province of Ontario’s Health Protection and Promotion Act when investigating standing water.	Staff suggest removing the authority of the Region to enforce the City’s Standing Water By-law, as well as to create a City website page referring readers to York Region’s website as well.	To ensure the City’s Standing Water By-law, as well as City media, reflect current practices and their legislative authority.

Review the following resources for more information about mosquitoes and the diseases they spread

- [1] *Water Sanitation and Health*. (n.d.) World Health Organization. Retrieved January 14, 2026, from <https://www.who.int/teams/environment-climate-change-and-health/water-sanitation-and-health/environmental-health-in-emergencies/humanitarian-emergencies>.
- [2] *Mosquitoes and Mosquito-borne diseases*. (n.d.) Government of Canada. Retrieved January 14, 2026, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/mosquitoes.html>.
- [3] *Mosquito-borne diseases and climate change*. (n.d.) Climate Atlas of Canada. Retrieved January 14, 2026, from <https://climateatlas.ca/mosquito-borne-diseases-and-climate-change>.
- [4] *Vector-borne diseases*. (n.d.) World Health Organization. Retrieved January 14, 2026, from <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/vector-borne-diseases>.
- [5] *West Nile Virus*. (n.d.) Regional Municipality of York. Retrieved February 5, 2026, from <https://www.york.ca/health/infectious-diseases-and-prevention/west-nile-virus>.

Financial Impact

There is no anticipated financial impact as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Operational Impact

There is no significant anticipated impact on operations as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The City's new Standing Water By-law will continue to contribute to York Region's work to prevent, monitor and mitigate insect-vector diseases, for which standing water is breeding ground for these insects. The proposed new by-law will further contribute to the Region's work by enabling the City to more swiftly address potential issues, as well more accurately reflect the legal authority under which activities are being undertaken.

Eliminating standing water and potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes, may reduce the incidence of mosquito-transmitted diseases, and the incidence of West Nile and other water-borne illnesses in Vaughan.

Conclusion

The recommendations of this report support maintaining healthy communities in Vaughan, and City Council's Term of Council priorities of Community Well-being and Environmental Sustainability. The proposed by-law changes are intended to address the increased risk of mosquito-transmitted diseases and standing water-borne illnesses, by enabling the City to have greater latitude in dealing with adverse conditions and thus responding to potential threats. Through strengthened enforcement powers, the focus of City efforts can increasingly support water-borne disease prevention.

For more information, please contact: Rudi Czekalla-Martinez, Director and Chief Licensing Officer (Acting), By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, ext. 8782.

Attachments

There are no attachments.

Prepared by

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