



Dysart et al Septic Maintenance Inspection Program

Frequently Asked Questions

As a homeowner, programs like this can seem daunting and overwhelming. You may find yourself with various questions about the program, or about septic systems in general. Please click on the questions below to learn more.

[**My house and/or septic system are more than 30m from the lake, does that mean I am exempt?**](#)

[**I have a composting/ incinerating toilet and/or outhouse, there is no septic here does that mean I am exempt?**](#)

[**I don't have a toilet, but I have a sink/shower/washing machine, do I still need to be inspected?**](#)

[**What am I supposed to do to prepare for a greywater inspection?**](#)

[**What am I supposed to do to prepare for a holding tank inspection?**](#)

[**I just call my pumping company when I need my holding tank pumped out, why do I need a contract?**](#)

[**I monitor the sewage measurements of my tank using a dipstick, why do I need a high-volume alarm?**](#)

[**Should I pump my septic tank before you come for inspection?**](#)

[**Why do you care how many bedrooms I have?**](#)

[**I only use my cottage seasonally and only have extra guests on rare occasions, why do my extra bedrooms count?**](#)

[**I didn't ask for an inspection, why do I have to pay for it?**](#)

[**How do I pay for the inspection? Should I pay the inspector when they arrive?**](#)

Inspection Criteria

The by-law requires all properties that are located within 30m of a Lake and that have a Class 2, 3, 4 or 5 system older than 5 years of age to be inspected. Again, the inspection requirement pertains to the location of the property in proximity to the lake, not to the location of the dwelling or septic system.

System Classifications:

- Class 2 – Greywater Systems
- Class 3 – Cesspool System
- Class 4 – Conventional Septic System
- Class 5 – Holding Tanks

The by-law outlines certain criteria to which a property may be eligible for exemption, this is outlined in the Exemption Criteria of this document. Please note that staff must be able to confirm that this criterion is met without any doubt. In some cases, a Site Confirmation Inspection may be required to confirm this, and a fee may apply as per the fee schedule available on our website.

No Plumbing Confirmation

Without a visual inspection, staff have no way of knowing what is on site. As stated above, an exemption cannot be granted unless staff are sure that the criteria is met without any doubts. It is our duty to confirm that any sewage or wastewater on a property is being treated by an approved sewage treatment system.

This response is relevant to all properties with an outhouse, incinerating toilet, composting toilet, etc.

Greywater Treatment

To simplify the Ontario Building Code definition, greywater is water that discharges from a sink, shower, laundry machine, dishwasher, outdoor shower, etc. This water does not contain human waste; however, it is still wastewater produced by domestic means and therefore requires treatment through a Class 2, 4 or 5 system. If the water is being treated through a Greywater treatment system (Class 2) it must meet minimum code requirements for design and construction. Specific information on the design of these types of systems can be found on our Building and Septic Department webpage, and in the Ontario Building Code.

One key factor that will be looked at during the inspection is that the greywater pit contains an access hatch for inspection and maintenance purposes. If your property has a greywater system, please expose the top prior to the inspector's arrival to allow for a complete inspection.

Holding Tanks

A class 5 or holding tank system is a confined treatment unit and they are typically buried deeper in the ground with a pump out stack accessible at the surface for pump out maintenance. For these types of inspections, we are checking that the access port is in good, stable condition and is adequately covered so that rainwater and other surface related matter cannot get into the tank. We will also be checking that the tank is equipped with an operational audio/visual alarm, and that the property is covered by a haulage agreement with a local sewage hauler.

An audio/visual alarm is required for properties serviced by a pump chamber, and/or holding tank. These alarms are designed to notify property owners when the sewage levels within the tank reach a certain level so that the owner can arrange for maintenance before the tank backs up, or overflows. A haulage agreement is a signed contract between you and a qualified sewage hauler that set your property as a priority when calling to schedule a pump out so that your tank does not overflow before the pump out takes place.

Preparation for a Class 5 inspection is simple if all 3 of the previously mentioned components are accessible for the inspector when they arrive on site.

Pump out Requirements

During the inspection, staff will be inspecting the tanks to confirm that they are maintaining a proper operating level. This is further explored during the flow test to ensure that levels are not rising when the tank is receiving sewage from the dwelling. For these reasons, staff request that you do not complete a tank pump out prior to your inspection date if it can be avoided. If a pump out must take place, we ask that you allow for 1-2 weeks of regular usage to have the tank return to operating levels prior to the inspection. If the levels are low when the inspector arrives due to a recent pump out, you will be asked to show proof of your pump out by providing us with a copy of your invoice.

With that being said, not all systems will be required to have a pump out completed because of the inspection. Our by-law outlines certain criteria which a pump out is required. If your system does not fall within one of those criteria, a pump out will not be required for compliance with our inspection program. The pump out criteria is listed below, and property owners will be notified in their inspection report if the pump out is needed.

1. There is no record of installation on file with the municipality.
2. The septic tank was installed prior to 1980.
3. The septic tank is metal.
4. Scum/ sludge levels exceed 1/3 of the working capacity of the settling chamber of the septic tank. Or,
5. Where an issue with the levels of the tank or other functions of the tank is determined during the inspection.

If you receive your inspection report and there is an indication that a pump out is required, you will need to arrange for the pump out to take place with a qualified sewage hauler within 60 days of the date of your report. Furthermore, you will need to communicate with your sewage hauler that an invoice is required with a brief comment on tank conditions. You will need to submit this invoice to our department upon completion.

System Sizing

The Ontario Building Code outlines calculations used to determine the minimum size of septic systems. The base loading is determined based on number of bedrooms and a set loading as indicated by Table 8.2.1.3A. This means that your system sizing is largely dependent on the number of bedrooms it serves.

Furthermore, the Ontario Building Code does not distinguish between full time and seasonal use. This means that although your property may be used seasonally and therefore the overuse of the bedroom(s) is not frequent, the OBC still sees this as an overuse and therefore it is an infraction. Your inspection report outlines your options for achieving compliance. This information is also available on our website.

Fees

As per the by-law passed by council, there are fees associated with the various inspection types of this program. These fees cover staff costs, software required for the program, materials/ equipment costs, etc. Staff have put in every effort to keep these costs on the owner as low as possible.

The fees are invoiced to property owners by our tax department and are billed directly to their property tax accounts. This allows property owners to make payments in an easy fashion, the same way they would pay their taxes.

The full fee schedule is available on our website.