

# 'Major glitch' hits sewer project

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An American drilling company has left town after a second attempt to install a sewer pipeline beneath the Grand River ended in failure.

Now the entire process of drilling into the bedrock beneath the river has been put into question and concerns have been raised that the city may be facing a serious and costly impasse.

The problem arose Friday when the subcontractor tried to enlarge a pilot hole and had difficulty maintaining the hole's integrity. The pilot hole for a 16-inch sewer siphon was completed last week.

"The contractor has advised that he has temporarily ceased his operations while he explores technical options in order to complete the directional drilling program," city councillors were told in a one-paragraph report from city engineer Alf Gretzinger.

The pipeline was designed to carry water to and sewage from the northwest industrial park.

Coun. Pat Franklin said she learned about the problem after visiting the site Sunday with fellow Coun. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith.

Franklin said she thought that the city engineer should have attended Monday's meeting to tell councillors about situation in person.

## LITTLE INFORMATION

But Mayor Chris Friel said that little information is available now about possible solutions. More concrete information is expected by next Monday's administrative committee meeting.

"It's a major technical glitch. But we don't know the nature of the problem yet," he told reporters following Monday's planning committee meeting.

"We're in a wait-and-see position."

Six Nations hasn't been notified of the difficulty because it's not yet known whether an alteration in the legal agreement with the native community will be required.

"It will be a test of how good our relationship is," said Friel.

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The mayor has spent considerable time and energy developing closer relationships with the Six Nations' elected council and Confederacy. A legal agreement permitting the pipeline was approved, in part, because the drilling technique was seen to be environmentally superior to alternatives.

Friel said council will eventually have to decide whether to try drilling again or seek an alternate method of passing sewer and water pipelines beneath the river to service the northwest industrial park.

These options could include suspending pipelines from a newly constructed bridge crossing the river.

This latest difficulty raises many questions about the project and ongoing costs, said Coun. Bob Taylor.

Councillors were warned several weeks ago that cost overruns of up to 35 per cent on the \$3 million project could be expected following previous drilling problems.

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