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Council utilizes budget meeting for visioning session

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NORTH PERTH – At its first budget meeting of the year, North Perth council used the session as a visioning opportunity, to hear thoughts on issues the municipality is facing and where they would like to see the budget spent. The budget committee provided members of council with a chance to give senior staff suggestions and direction.

Tiffany Anger, communications coordinator for North Perth, shared the results of the budget survey with council in a brief presentation. In it, she discussed the concerns facing the municipality, where citizens would like to see more or less tax dollars spent, and satisfaction with municipal services.

Lee Anne Andriessen, budget chair, explained the rules surrounding the visioning session, where each council member went over their priorities for the budget. Many common themes were discussed by council members. Firstly, transportation was a topic that garnered the most attention and support. This includes talk of the proposed truck bypass as well as the municipality's transportation master plan.

"We need to deal with this term. There needs to be action on this," budget co-chair Neil Anstett urged.

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Dan McNee Photo

SPLIT DECISION – The LDSS girls' hockey squad wrapped up its Huron-Perth Athletics regular season on Jan. 11 at the Kerr Complex in Listowel, with the Lightning dropping their opening game 2-0 to the St. Michael Catholic Warriors before rebounding with a 3-0 victory over Stratford DSS. 2022-23 marks the first season for girls' varsity hockey since 2016. Pictured: Lightning goaltender Addison Stevens makes a second-period pad stop against St. Mike's. See the story inside on page 8.

Listowel residents raise concerns about water clarity

*Kelly Munroe:
'It just got worse,
to where it was
like soya sauce'*

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LISTOWEL – Kelly Munroe simply has to turn on any tap in her house to know that something is off with her water.

The Listowel resident and mother of a six-month-old baby girl had her frustration reach a new level last Tuesday night, while she was drawing a bath for her daughter. It was a rare instance when the water was fairly clear – for what has become a low standard for her Lavery Street home – and after hurriedly preparing little Laura for the tub with her husband, Scott, and getting the temperature just right, she placed her in the bath seat and turned to



Contributed Photo

WOEFUL WATER – Kelly Munroe had experienced ongoing issues with her water clarity since moving into her Lavery Street home five years ago, but nothing to the level she experienced on Jan. 10, as pictured above. The Listowel mother has been working with the municipality to help rectify the situation, one that has been shared by other residents throughout the town.

the mirror to begin taking off her makeup. Turning back a few seconds later, her baby was already sitting in water that was turning a deep orange/brown colour.

"It looked like tea – orange pekoe tea," she said. "You could still see through it, but it wasn't OK."

After they cleaned off Laura's

legs with a cloth that also became instantly stained the same colour and after washing her thoroughly with bottled water, Kelly continued to run the water to see if it would improve. In short, it did not.

"It just got worse, to where it was like soya sauce," she said with a grimace, adding that the iron-rich smell her tub was emitting was similar to that of blood. "This was a whole different level."

Unclear water isn't a new occurrence for Kelly and her family, but this was certainly the worst it had been. She posted a photo of her bathtub to the What's up Listowel Facebook page and was immediately inundated with comments, mostly from other residents in support who had experienced their own incidents with discoloured water.

Munroe has lived in the house since 2018 after moving there from Milton, and during that time has filed three formal complaints with the Municipality of North Perth Public Works Department. Staff had recommended a number of avenues, from the standard purging of the water heater, to installing a water softener, to changing the water filters.

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Municipality investigating Listowel water woes

Continued from front

Nothing has helped, leading her to believe that the problem lies outside her home's plumbing.

Regardless of the source of the iron-rich water coming through her taps, Munroe and her family are reluctant to drink it, bathe in it, and sufficiently wash their clothes in it. She estimates that they spend upwards of \$700 a month on filters (which are completely discoloured with rust with less than two weeks of usage) and bottled water – and that's on top of paying the bi-monthly water and sewer bill.

"I'm on maternity leave. How are people supposed to keep up with that cost?" she said. "I tested the iron level in our garden after watering all summer, and it was astronomical. Everything died. I'm not watering my plants with bottled water."

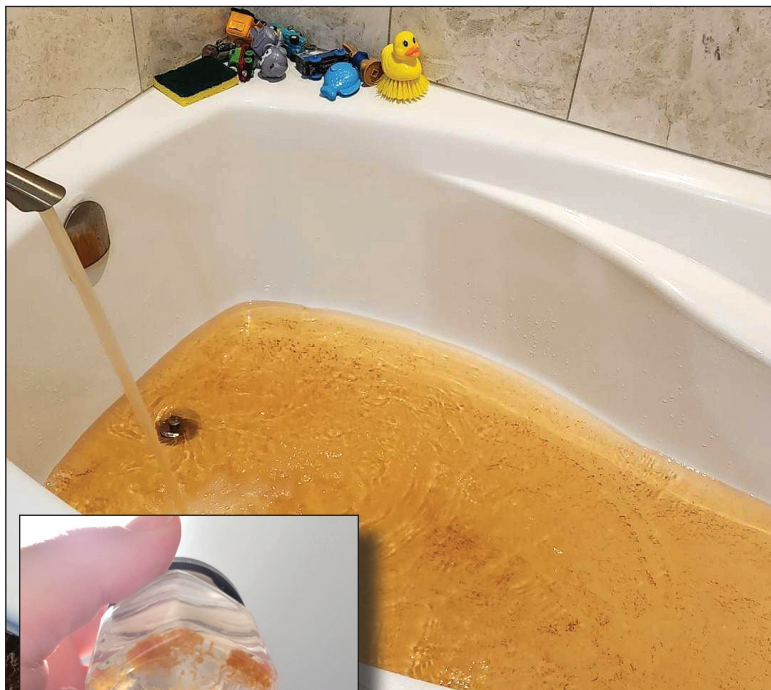
Potential health concerns

Iron is essential in making hemoglobin, a protein found in red blood cells that help carry oxygen throughout the body. A proper balance is required through diet, but complications can arise from receiving too much or too little of the substance.

Dr. Ian Cameron, a Listowel physician, said that ingesting larger amounts of iron orally through food or drinking water is typically not dangerous. People compromised with liver disease or younger children should be more wary of drinking water with elevated iron levels, as well as those with existing hereditary conditions like hemochromatosis – which causes the body to absorb too much iron while storing it in organs like the liver, heart or pancreas – would need to monitor their iron intake.

"For most of the general population, I'd be shocked if there was an issue," said Dr. Cameron.

Following the now infamous Jan. 10 incident where the bath water was particularly bad, Munroe took a cold-water sample



Contributed Photos

The Munroe residence isn't the only Listowel home to regularly experience discoloured tap water. Michael Moorley (above left) and Becca Berry (above right) submitted photos of what their bathroom faucets can produce; (Inset) Kelly Munroe displays a iron-laden water sample from her kitchen sink.

from her kitchen tap in a small container the following morning. The iron bacteria flakes in the sample were prevalent.

"They say they're not deadly or dangerous, but it's just gross that we can see it," she said. "Over a number of years, I don't know what that does to babies or anyone else."

Discoloured water around Listowel

Munroe lives in a modern home in Listowel's southwest quadrant; her house was built in 1997. The municipality confirmed that the water infrastructure used in the area was built in 1996, with eight-inch PVC pipe servicing the vicinity. After the *Banner* put out an online request for others experiencing similar problems with their water clarity, it received responses from residents around Listowel, some living in very recent builds.

Michael Moorley has lived on Armstrong Street West for over three years, and believes that Listowel "suffers from a huge iron problem."

"We moved in 2019 after the first owners and had this problem right away," Moorley commented via email, adding that he believes there should be more mandates to help regulate high iron levels in water. "Our lines downstairs in our unfinished basement are also plastic or rubber so it's not like it can be our lines. Water enters the house straight into the water heater. I will add that it's not only hot water, it's also cold water. Being a newer house that means our water heater is new also."

Ashok Kumar Purushothaman moved into a custom-built home on Gilmer Crescent in 2021, a

brand-new development near the Listowel Golf Club in the north-west quadrant of Listowel. Discoloured water has been an issue at Purushothaman's new home, as it was at their two previous Listowel addresses on Barber and Adams avenues.

"From the very first house we owned here, the first thing we'd do before moving in was to install a filter for drinking water as well as kitchen use," said Purushothaman via email.

Municipal response

Mark Hackett, manager of environmental services for North Perth, said that the municipality has received 13 formal complaints regarding water discoloration since May 2022. He asks that anyone having any sort of issue with their water supply to reach out to municipal staff by calling the office directly or through the online citizen request portal found at northperth.ca.

"Then we have information of what the location is, what the problem is, and then we can troubleshoot the problem," said Hackett. "And then if we need to go to the site, we do."

Hackett wouldn't speculate to the potential reasoning behind new builds or homes with tankless water heaters having discoloured water issues, and doesn't believe that the number of complaints issued in the last eight months is unreasonable based on the size of the municipality.

"I don't think so," he said. "There's so many different reasons or so many different variables to what it could be. If it's something in the distribution system, sometimes it's when

we're flushing mains (conducted twice annually in the spring and fall, and typically overnight to minimize service disruption) or if there is work being done, or if we're exercising valves that we do in the summer. Sometimes even abnormally-high usage of water can cause more water going through the water mains, which can stir things up a little bit.

"But typically, it's something within the eternal plumbing of the home. It's often the water heater – that's the biggest culprit that we find."

Potential solutions

Municipal staff attended Munroe's home on Monday for an inspection. And while no immediate specific cause for the murky state of her water could be found, Hackett said that the municipality would continue to monitor the situation. Regular iron level tests will also be on the docket going forward, despite higher levels of government not requiring municipalities to do so.

In a follow-up interview, Munroe commented that the municipal staff "were good to deal with," and that they tested her house water specifically for chlorine and whether it was safe for drinking in terms of current regulations. It passed.

"They said (the water) should not be discoloured all the time though, so suggested a solution called 'shocking,'" said Munroe via text message. "It is when we have a plumber in at the water meter, and they attach a hose, while a town employee turns on and off the water outside. This changes the pressure and forces the sediment build up out of the

pipe. He said it seems to help a lot of people. So I think we are going to do that.

"They mentioned that our water being exceptionally bad last Tuesday may have been due to timing. And that maybe we happened to run her bath when a large amount of sediment was suspended. It likely could have happened to anyone if they tried to use the water at the same time. Hopefully their plan has a good outcome."

North Perth's last posted water report in 2021 (the 2022 report is forthcoming) showed a near flawless record after testing for a myriad of bacteria, elements and other potentially-harmful substances.

Hackett affirmed that there is nothing to fear about Listowel's drinking water.

"Oh no, absolutely not. We do all the testing weekly, monthly, semi-annually, annually that we're required to do through the *Safe Drinking Water Act* and Ontario regulations 170 and 169, that sets out what those parameters are," said Hackett. "We're inspected by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks on an annual basis. We scored 100 per cent on all four water systems last year. We run our system to the best of our ability and we try to maintain it; we do valve exercising, and everything else to maintain a good system."

"Sometimes there are issues, and once we find out what they are then we'll try to come up with a plan to rectify anything that may be a problem. The water is safe – it's been tested. Every test that has ever been required has been completed as required."

Stork Report

2023

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Marjorie and Dwayne Frey from Mount Forest, a girl.

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Christine and Andrew Martin, a girl.

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