

**Education and Health
Manitoba Provincial Council**

2018.02 Setting a Standard for Products Marketed as Flushable

Whereas, there is no national standard of testing and labelling of products marketed as “flushable”; and

Whereas, products are being sold labelled as “flushable” with no regulation on that term; and

Whereas, Canadians are spending over \$250 million a year for maintenance and repair of sewer collection systems because of inappropriate disposal of products marketed as “flushable”; therefore, be it

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada in 98th annual national convention assembled urge the federal government to establish a national standard of testing and labelling of products marketed as “flushable”; and be it further

Resolved, that this resolution be forwarded through the national executive to the provincial councils, encouraging them to become aware of this issue as it pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed necessary/prudent.

BRIEF: Setting a Standard for Products Marketed as Flushable

Canada has no standards, regulations or official definitions for the use of the term “flushable”. (CWWA 2017). “...new innovations in materials might make it possible for certain products to be flushed, if they pass a technical standard (in compliance with local legislative requirements) which has been developed and agreed by the water and wastewater industry” (IWSFG 2016).

The International Water Services Flushability Group, of which Canadian Water and Wastewater Associations is a part, have “developed criteria for items that can be flushed down the toilet...to be flushable a product must (a) break into small pieces quickly, (b) not be buoyant, (c) not contain plastic or regenerated cellulose but only contain materials which will readily degrade in a range of natural environments” (IWSFG 2016).

“Any developed standard...would require adoption within Canada, as a Canadian Standard, to be enforceable” (CWWA/MESUG 2017). “In both the U.S. and Canada, manufacturers say they voluntarily test products for flushability, but federal laws don’t require third-party assessment or verification” (CWWA 2015).

“The biggest problem is the fact that products are being sold with a label called ‘flushable’, and there is no standard or regulation on that term. Baby wipes are clearly not flushable, but they seem similar to flushable wipes, and people start to think everything is flushable” (CWWA 2015). Canada is leading an international effort to establish and enforce standards on the multimillion dollar wipe industry that will spell out the meaning of “flushable” said a spokesperson for the Ontario-based Municipal Enforcement Sewer Group (CWWA 2015). “Only the 3Ps – Pee, Poo and Toilet Paper – should be flushed: (IWSFG 2016).

“An ISO [International Organization for Standardization] initiative was commenced in 2014 by Canada through ISO’s Technical Committee (TC) 224. Considerable progress was made on the development of a Technical Specification regarding the quality and characteristics of products that might be considered “flushable” and how products, flushable and non-flushable, might be clearly labeled. This international committee consisted of both utility representatives as well as those in the wipes manufacturing industry. This work was nearing completion when it was halted by a challenge from the manufacturers concerning test methods” (CWWA/MESUG 2017).

“So-called flushable items are a part of a growing problem that is giving homeowners headaches and costing municipalities millions of dollars annually as noxious, non-dissolvable debris clogs up the pumps and pipes of sewer and septic systems” (CWWA 2015). “From additional maintenance, to equipment damage, to clogs and system failures to contamination of sludge, this issue is costing Canadian municipalities over \$250 million each year” (CWWA/MESUG 2017). “Flushable wipes are clogging sewers across Canada.... While these ‘flushable’ wipes may swirl down the toilet with ease, they don’t disintegrate, creating serious problems as they work their way through sewer systems on their way to treatment plants” (City of Halifax). “Many items we use on a daily basis cannot go down our toilets or drains. Several products, even those labelled “flushable” do not dissolve” (City of Toronto).

The federal government is urged to establish a national standard of testing and labelling of products to be marketed as “flushable”.

Works Cited

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2. Canadian Water and Wastewater Association et al, July 2016 *International Water Services Flushability Group Position Statement*, July 2016, [http;](http://www.cwwa.ca/flushables_e.asp)
3. Canadian Water and Wastewater Association, October 2017 *Progress Report 2017* CWWA, www.cwwa.ca/flushables_e.asp
4. Canadian Water and Wastewater Association, *International Water Industry Position Statement on non-flushable and ‘flushable’ labelled products*, www.cwwa.ca/pdf_files/international_flushability_statement.pdf
5. Halifax, City of, “Preventing Pollution of Halifax’s Water System.” *Community | Energy | Plan | Sustainability | Efficiency | Halifax*, 30 Apr. 2018, www.halifax.ca/home-property/halifax-water/stormwater-services/preventing-pollution-halifaxs-water-system
6. Toronto, City of, “*What not to flush or pour down the Drain*” www.Toronto.ca/services-payment/water-sewer-related-permits-and-bylaws/sewer-by-laws/what-not-to-flush-or-pour-down-the-drain/ May 7, 2017

Action Plan

1. Write letters to the prime minister and the department of environment and natural resources with copies to your local member of parliament urging the federal government to establish a national standard of testing to be met by manufacturers of products marketed as “flushable”.
2. Request an awareness campaign of the consequences of inappropriate disposal of products in our sewer system through municipal and provincial governments.
3. Hold a speaker presentation on the harmful effects of flushing so-called “flushable” products.
4. Monitor the federal government’s response to the request contained in the resolution.