St. Catharines
PO Box 3012, 50 Church St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7C2

Emergency FLAP Frequently Asked Questions

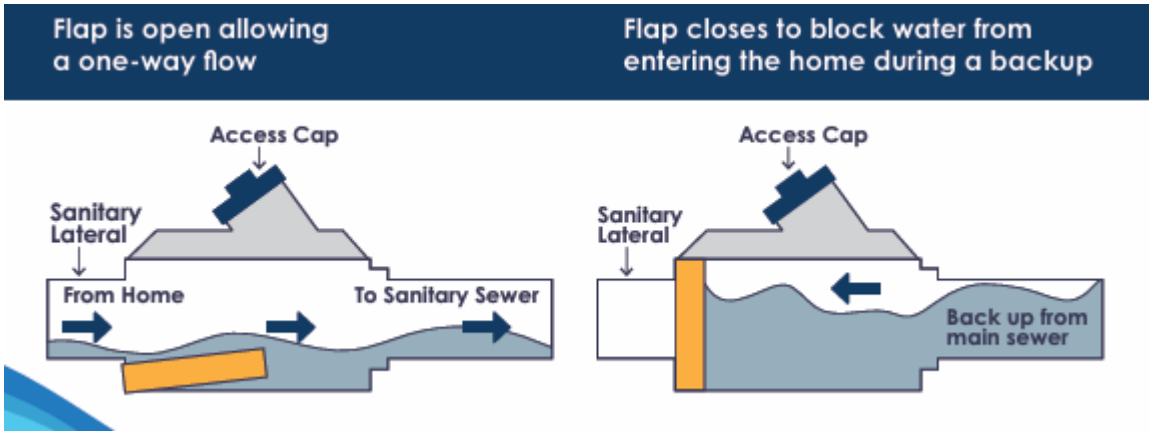
This program is for homeowners who are aiming to mitigate the risk of basement flooding or who have directly experienced flooding caused by a sewer surcharge event, such as water backing up through a basement floor drain. This program will not protect against overland or infiltration flooding, including water entering through foundation cracks, window wells or other openings.

How does Emergency FLAP help mitigate the risk of basement flooding?

Emergency FLAP includes two key measures that work together to help reduce the risk of basement flooding. First, the installation of a backwater valve helps protect the home by preventing sewage from flowing back into the basement during a sewer surcharging event. Second, if the home's weeping tile is connected to the sanitary sewer, the disconnection of the weeping tile and redirection to a sump pit helps to reduce the amount of stormwater entering the sanitary sewer during rain events, which can contribute to sewer surcharging and increase the risk of basement flooding. Together, these measures help protect individual homes while reducing excess flows within the sanitary sewer system.

What is a backwater valve?

A backwater valve is a device installed on the home's sanitary lateral in place of the existing main cleanout. It prevents sewage from flowing back into the home during a sewer surcharging event.



What is a sump pump?

A sump pump is a device that collects and removes excess rainwater or groundwater from around your home's foundation via a weeping tile connection. It sits in a pit (called a sump pit) and automatically pumps water away from the house to help prevent basement flooding and water damage.

What is a weeping tile?

A weeping tile (also referred to as a foundation drain or weepers) is a perforated pipe installed around a property's foundation to collect and redirect groundwater away from the basement or crawl space. Historically, weeping tiles were connected to a home's sanitary lateral, which can contribute to sewer back-ups and lead to basement flooding during heavy rainfall events.

Why do I need a plumbing permit?

A permit is required to ensure the proposed work complies with the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and program requirements. Permits have always been required for the installation or alteration of plumbing systems, and obtaining all required permits has been a condition of participation in the Flood Alleviation Program (FLAP) since the program's inception. As a condition of participation in the Emergency Flood Alleviation Program, applicants are responsible for ensuring that all required permits are obtained before any modification or renovation work begins. A valid permit is still required for Emergency FLAP funding eligibility.

Permits are not intended to be punitive; rather, they are a provincial legislative requirement to help ensure that work is completed correctly and in accordance with applicable regulations and is subject to inspection by the City's Plumbing Inspectors (an unbiased, plumbing professional). Permits also allow the City to maintain accurate records of work completed on private property.

Who is responsible for hiring and paying the contractor?

The Homeowner is responsible for both hiring and paying the Contractor. Under no circumstances will the FLAP rebate be paid directly to the plumbing contractor.

Do I have to wait for a City crew to complete an initial inspection?

Under the Emergency FLAP, Homeowners will no longer have to book an initial assessment with the City. Please ensure that the contractor you hire completes a plumbing assessment to confirm whether weeping tiles are connected to the sanitary lateral. A final inspection with a City Plumbing Inspector will still be required to close the permit.

What if I want a backwater valve, but do not want to disconnect my weeping tile from the sanitary sewer?

To be eligible for the rebate, all weeping tile connections to the sanitary lateral must be disconnected and redirected to a sump pit. If weeping tile connections are not disconnected and redirected, sewage could be forced into the weeping tile and lead to structural damage, infiltration flooding and other issues. Also see Part 7 of the Ontario Building Code for more information.

How and when do I receive my rebate once all the work is completed?

FLAP rebate cheques are mailed directly to the Homeowner at their home address, after the final invoice is submitted and the permit is closed. Processing times vary, but rebate cheques are typically mailed within 4–6 weeks.

Can I choose any contractor I want?

Yes. As long as the contractor uses a certified plumber for all plumbing-related work. The City does not endorse, recommend or require specific contractors. The contractor/plumber is responsible for obtaining a business license to work in the City of St. Catharines, as per By-Law No. 2001-19.

Do I need to use a local plumber?

The plumber you choose to complete the work must have a valid business license with the City of St. Catharines but they do not have to be local to St. Catharines. The City of St. Catharines regulates business licensing for plumbers under By-law No. 2001-19. It is the responsibility of the contractor to obtain their business license. More information can be found at: Business Licences | City of St. Catharines

Can I still apply if my basement hasn't flooded?
Your property does not need to have experienced flooding to apply, provided that all other eligibility requirements are met.

What type of maintenance will be involved in the future for a backwater valve?
Performing regular inspections and maintenance on the backwater valve is the homeowner's responsibility to help ensure that the valve can activate properly. This involves checking, brushing, or removing any debris from inside the valve, to ensure closure and a tight seal. For further instruction see: Backwater Valve Maintenance - Top Tips for Reducing Flood Risk at the Lot Level

What type of maintenance will be involved in the future for a sump pump?
Performing regular inspections and maintenance on the sump pump is the homeowner's responsibility to help ensure that the pump activates when needed. It is also recommended to have a back-up battery system available to keep the pump running in the event of a power failure. For further instruction see: Sump Pump Maintenance - Top Tips for Reducing Flood Risk at the Lot Level

How will I know if my backwater valve has been activated?
If it is raining, you can check to see if the backwater valve has been activated by removing the cover and looking to see if the valve is in the closed position through the clear top, or by removing the cleanout cap, depending on the model. If the valve is closed, it is very important that you do not use any water (e.g., running the shower, washing machine, flushing toilets, etc.) as it will not be able to exit via your sanitary lateral and could result in a back-up. Once the rain has stopped and the valve has opened, you may resume using water as usual.

What should I do if my basement floods when FLAP work exists?
If FLAP-installed devices have failed and flooding occurred, homeowners should consider:

- **Contacting the original contractor** to investigate the installation.
- **Hire a licensed plumber** for a second opinion or repairs.
- **Request a sewer lateral inspection or blocked-drain service** through Citizen's First (fees may apply).
- **Submit a claim** to the City Legal Department if the homeowner believes the City is responsible: https://www.stcatharines.ca/en/council-and-administration/submitting-a-claim.aspx

Note: the installation of a backwater valve will only help to alleviate basement flooding related to a sewer surcharging event and will not protect against overland or infiltration flooding.

Are condominium and/or townhouse properties eligible for Emergency FLAP?
Condominium properties are not eligible to apply for FLAP, as the program does not apply to properties where the relevant infrastructure is privately owned or maintained; compared to a standalone residential property whose sewer lateral is directly connected to the City's sanitary/storm infrastructure.

Townhouse properties can also present additional complications where work involves shared plumbing or drainage infrastructure. For example, weeping tile connections may serve more than one unit and installing a backwater valve on a shared sanitary line could affect or compromise the drainage arrangements of other units. These situations require consideration of the shared

infrastructure and the potential impact on other units.

If you have questions about the plumbing or drainage work you are considering, Planning and Building Services can review the proposed work and advise on applicable requirements and next steps. They can be reached at Building@stcatharines.ca.

Are non-residential properties eligible for Emergency FLAP?

Only residential properties (single detached, semi-detached, duplex, triplex, or quadplex) constructed before 2012 and directly connected to the City's sanitary sewer system are eligible for the Emergency FLAP. Applications for commercial, industrial, institutional, or mixed-use properties will not be considered.

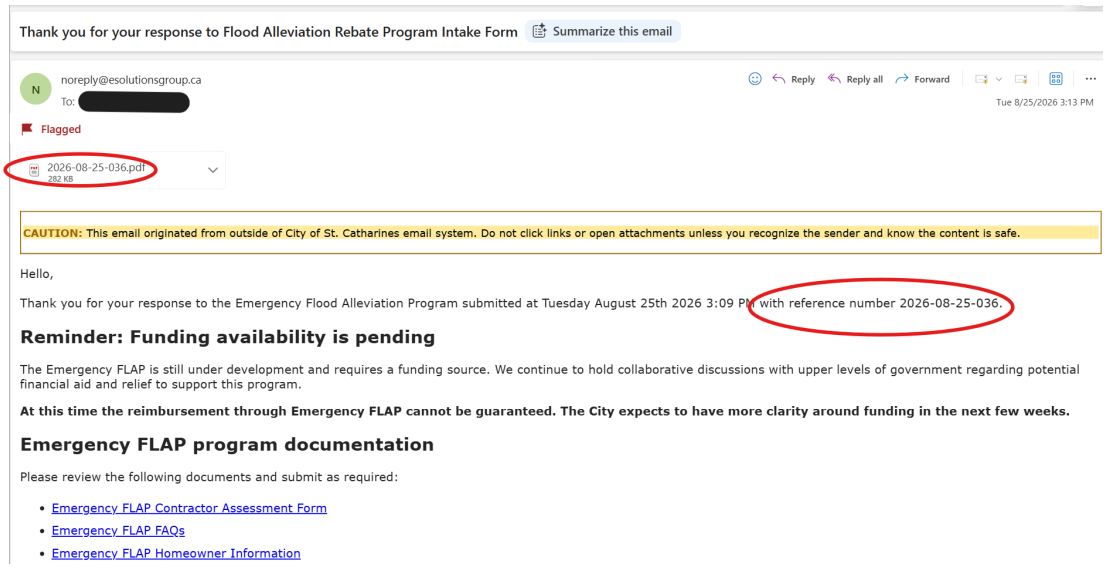
Am I still eligible if the contractor has already completed the work without a permit?

If work has been completed without the required permit, the property owner will be required to obtain a permit retroactively. This process may involve additional fees, inspections, excavation, camera assessments, or the exposure or removal of completed work to verify compliance with applicable codes, standards, and general permit requirements. All associated costs, corrective work, and delays are the sole responsibility of the property owner.

While a contractor may apply for a permit on the homeowner's behalf, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all required permits are obtained rests solely with the property owner. Failure to obtain required permits will affect the eligibility of the work and associated costs for Emergency FLAP funding.

Where do I find my FLAP Application Reference Number?

If you submitted your application through our website you should have received a confirmation email. Please note that this email did not come from the City of St. Catharines. You can search **noreply@esolutionsgroup.ca** to help locate it. There should be a pdf copy of your completed FLAP application attached to the email and the file name is your reference number.


Thank you for your response to Flood Alleviation Rebate Program Intake Form Summarize this email

N noreply@esolutionsgroup.ca
To: [redacted]

Reply Reply all Forward
Tue 8/25/2026 3:13 PM

Flagged

2026-08-25-036.pdf
282 KB

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of City of St. Catharines email system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

Thank you for your response to the Emergency Flood Alleviation Program submitted at Tuesday August 25th 2026 3:09 PM with reference number 2026-08-25-036.

Reminder: Funding availability is pending

The Emergency FLAP is still under development and requires a funding source. We continue to hold collaborative discussions with upper levels of government regarding potential financial aid and relief to support this program.

At this time the reimbursement through Emergency FLAP cannot be guaranteed. The City expects to have more clarity around funding in the next few weeks.

Emergency FLAP program documentation

Please review the following documents and submit as required:

- Emergency FLAP Contractor Assessment Form
- Emergency FLAP FAQs
- Emergency FLAP Homeowner Information

Are hydrostatic sump pumps an eligible expense?

No, the installation of a hydrostatic sump pump will not be covered by the Emergency FLAP rebate. Only sump pump installations for the purpose of disconnecting weeping tile from the sanitary sewer and redirecting to a sump pit are an eligible expense through the program.

How will I know if the work will be reimbursable?

If applicants are unsure of how to determine what work is eligible under the Emergency FLAP, please refer to the *Emergency FLAP Decision Tree* available for review at www.stcatharines.ca/emergencyFLAP

How can I submit my documentation, to receive my Emergency FLAP rebate?

Once your approved work is complete and you have passed the required plumbing inspection, use the form to submit your documentation for final review and payment. The new form guides you through the required information and documents, helping to prevent incomplete submissions. This allows City staff to review your submission and process your payment more quickly.

For faster processing, please submit your final documentation using the new online form:

Emergency FLAP Final Submission Form - St Catharines