

Drone technology examined as modern solution to long-standing challenges

March 11, 2020 — The City is previewing a novel solution to the age-old problem of monitoring and assessing its less-accessible infrastructure.

Residents along the Welland Canal and along waterways in Port Dalhousie might notice some drones — or remotely-piloted aircraft systems — zipping overhead in the days to come as City Engineering, Facilities and Environmental Services staff take in a demonstration from Mohawk College’s IDEAWORKS applied research department. The effort will explore the ways in which the use of drones, outfitted with various equipment such as radiometric infrared cameras, can aid in the monitoring of specific, and difficult to reach, sewers and outflows.

“The abilities of drone technologies are always expanding, and there are some unique opportunities here,” said Manager of Environmental Services Mark Green, adding, “specifically drones could allow us to easily reach and inspect certain portions and sections of the water system that historically have been hard to monitor. Increased monitoring means we can catch problems before they become critical and costly to fix or negatively impact the environment.”

For example, drones, with the ability to land on water and fitted with submersible cameras, could be used to monitor underwater outfalls, mapping their location and using thermal cameras to determine the condition of the outfall and its connection to sewers.

Exploring new avenues to monitor infrastructure supports the City of St. Catharines Strategic Plan pillar of economic prosperity, allowing the City to realize efficiencies in the maintenance costs of infrastructure and better identify replacement needs.

The test of the drones will explore sewers and outfalls in typically unsafe and inaccessible terrain along the Welland Canal, Old Welland Canal, Briarsdale Creek and along Lake Ontario. The demonstration will take place over the mornings of March 12, 13, 16 and 17 depending on weather conditions.

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News Release

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