

# Homeowners Guide to Foundation Drain Connections

## What is a foundation drain?

Urban residences in Durham Region are typically serviced by separate sanitary and storm sewer systems.

The **sanitary sewer system** is designed to collect wastewater, such as the flows from toilets, sinks, showers and laundry. This wastewater is directed to a treatment facility where it receives a high level of treatment prior to being discharged to a watercourse or lake. Durham Region is responsible for the management of the sanitary sewer system.

The **storm sewer system** is designed to collect precipitation and runoff, such as the flows from rainfall events and snow melts. These flows are directed to a nearby watercourse, pond or lake. Your local municipality is typically responsible for management of the storm sewer system.

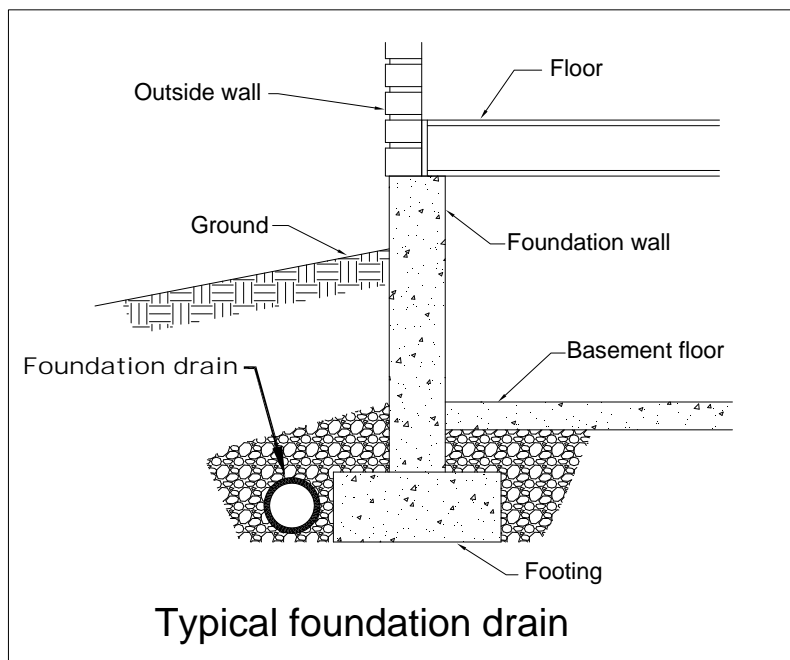
A **foundation drain** (also known as a **weeper** or **weeping tile**) is a perforated pipe installed at the base of a foundation in order to drain away excess groundwater. This prevents groundwater from building up against a foundation, thus protecting the foundation from leaking or shifting.

Prior to the 1980s, it was a common and accepted practice in Durham Region to discharge foundation drain flows to a sanitary sewer. Areas developed since then typically discharge foundation drain flows to a storm sewer. Recently, some areas have been developed with a **foundation drain collector**, which only receives foundation drain flows and conveys them to a nearby watercourse. Your local municipality is responsible for the management of the foundation drain collector.

### **DID YOU KNOW . . .**

**SANITARY SEWER BACKUPS (ALSO KNOWN AS SURCHARGES) USUALLY HAPPEN DURING WET WEATHER EVENTS DUE TO LARGE VOLUMES OF STORM WATER ENTERING THE SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM.**

**IT HAS BEEN REGIONAL POLICY SINCE 1983 TO PROHIBIT THE CONNECTION OF FOUNDATION DRAINS TO SANITARY SEWERS.**



## **Why are foundation drain discharges to the sanitary sewer an issue?**

During rainfall events and snow melts, foundation drain connections are a major source of flow to the sanitary sewer system. These flows can overwhelm the sanitary sewer system and cause raw sewage backups into basements or overflows to the environment. These connections also direct groundwater (that is uncontaminated and does not require treatment) to a wastewater treatment facility, which increases the cost of conveying and processing wastewater.

Given the potential impacts associated with foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer, the Region of Durham prohibits new foundation drain connections to sanitary sewers, and promotes the disconnection of existing foundation drains from the sanitary sewer wherever possible.

## **Can I request a foundation drain connection to the sanitary sewer?**

At the discretion of the Commissioner of Works, Durham Region may permit new buildings or additions to existing buildings to direct foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer system. Requests should be submitted to the Works Department in writing and be accompanied by sufficient documentation to demonstrate to the Region's satisfaction that other methods of managing foundation drain flows are not feasible. Examples of such supporting documentation are a site plan, hydrogeological report, and/or sewer design sheet.

Foundation drain flows can typically be managed by the installation of a sump pump, which directs the flows to the lot surface or a storm sewer. In such cases, approvals for a sump pump and/or storm connection are administered by your local municipality (such as Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington, Scugog, Uxbridge, or Brock).

## **Durham Region Sewer Use By-Law**

Foundation drains associated with new buildings or additions to existing buildings are subject to the Region of Durham Sewer Use By-Law (43-2004) as follows:

- A new building constructed on a previously undeveloped lot is not permitted to direct foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer.
- A new addition to an existing building is not permitted to direct any foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer from the addition.
- If an existing building that directed foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer is demolished, any new building constructed on the lot is not permitted to direct foundation drain flows to the sanitary sewer.

The Sewer Use By-Law also permits Durham Region to disconnect an existing foundation drain from the sanitary sewer if the associated flows adversely affect the operation of the sanitary sewer system, or if the flows can be readily directed to a storm sewer or foundation drain collector.

The Sewer Use By-Law may be viewed on the Durham Region website under "Water and Sewer" on the Works Department page. Copies may also be obtained from the Works Department at Regional Headquarters during regular business hours.

For more information regarding the Sewer-Use By-Law, please call 905 668-7711, or you can view the by-law below:

- [Region of Durham Sewer-Use By-Law No. 43-2004](#)

## **Contact Information**

Requests to connect foundation drains to the sanitary sewer system should be submitted to:

Region of Durham, Works Department  
Engineering Planning and Studies Division  
Regional Headquarters  
605 Rossland Rd. E.  
Whitby, Ontario  
L1N 6A3

Further information on pursuing a foundation drain connection to a sanitary sewer may be obtained by calling the Region of Durham, Works Department during regular business hours at:

Telephone: 905-668-7711  
Toll-free: 1-800-372-1102