Infrastructure FAQs – Aging Piping in the Town of Oliver

Why is Oliver facing an infrastructure challenge with aging pipes?

Many BC municipal water and sewer systems were built between the 1950s–1980s and are now approaching or exceeding their intended service life, increasing risks of corrosion, leaks, and failures.

In Oliver specifically, projects such as the Similkameen Avenue utility replacement show that some local infrastructure is already beyond its lifespan.

What happens when old pipes deteriorate?

Aging pipes can experience joint separation, corrosion, deformation, collapse, and root intrusion, all of which can lead to leaks, water loss, service disruptions, or ground instability.

In severe cases, deterioration can cause costly emergency repairs and environmental contamination.

How does aging infrastructure affect residents?

Residents may experience temporary service outages, reduced water pressure, and road closures. These impacts occur because older systems are more prone to leaks, bursts, and service interruptions.

Are aging pipes a safety risk?

Old, corroded or fractured water mains can expose communities to contamination risks.

Some older municipal pipes in BC may contain asbestos cement, which must be handled with strict safety procedures.

What is the Town of Oliver doing to address aging infrastructure?

Oliver is pursuing upgrades and grants, including replacing aging infrastructure along Similkameen Avenue, increasing system capacity from 1,000 to 4,000 homes.

The town also aligns with provincial standards and funding programs.

How does the town decide which pipes to replace first?

Municipalities prioritize based on age, leak history, break records, inspection results, and public safety risk. Modern inspection tools help identify high-risk segments.

Why not just fix leaks as they happen?

Reactive repairs are 5–10 times more expensive than preventive maintenance.

Will infrastructure upgrades increase taxes or utility rates?

Projects like Similkameen Avenue seek federal co-funding up to 50% to reduce local burden.

New construction requires the developer to pay Development Cost Charges to pay for the infrastructure requirements for their development, further information on DCC's can be found in the Development Cost Charges Bylaw 1390.

How long do pipe replacement projects usually take?

Timelines vary, but a typical corridor upgrade in Oliver may take 9–12 months.

What technologies detect pipe problems?

Technologies include CCTV cameras, acoustic leak detection, radar, and corrosion scanning.

How does Oliver ensure drinking water stays safe during upgrades?

Water systems must meet provincial regulations and drinking water guidelines. Allowable leakage tests, disinfection and bacteriological tests are all completed prior to tying in new watermains into the Town's water system.

Why is long-term infrastructure investment important?

Across Canada, waterworks infrastructure is aging, with declining useful life.