



SURFACE DRAINAGE PROBLEMS

INTRODUCTION

The Drainage Bylaw C-1241 regulates storm sewers and storm drainage in the City of Grande Prairie, including surface drainage.

The Lot Grading Bylaw C-1240 regulates all new residential and commercial buildings constructed in the City of Grande Prairie. It is to ensure that all new buildings have a properly graded lot with surface drainage directed away from buildings.

All property owners are responsible to maintain surface grading on their property in a manner that protects their buildings from surface water and does not negatively impact adjacent properties.

Many older neighbourhoods in the City of Grande Prairie do not have approved Lot Grading Plans and some that have approved plans were developed prior to the implementation of the Lot Grading Approval Program.

Surface drainage problems that have developed gradually over a period of years, such as settlement, can become apparent after a rainstorm event or during snow melt. Re-grading or re-development can also create drainage problems or highlight existing issues. Both can result in basement flooding, property damage and disputes between neighbours. It is the property owner's responsibility to ensure their grading is correct and to maintain the grading.

Bylaw C-1240, the Lot Grading Guidelines, and the Lot Grading brochures were developed as a response to a growing number of complaints observed over the years. When complaints arise in areas of the City that do not have approved Lot Grading Plans, the Lot Grading Inspectors must be able to observe the presence of enforceable violations of the Lot Grading Bylaw or the Drainage Bylaw.

The City of Grande Prairie does not provide funding to rectify surface drainage problems situated on private property.



Settlement can cause low areas in yards, which results in pooling during heavy rain or snow melt.

Definitions

City land:	Any land owned or controlled by the City of Grande Prairie
Foundation drainage:	Water collected beneath the surface of the ground by a foundation drain or a weeping tile
Lot grading:	Shaping and sloping the land to direct surface drainage away from buildings and towards a City right-of-way
Negative impact:	Impairment of, or damage to, or the ability to cause impairment of, or damage to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Storm Drainage System; b) human health or safety; c) property; d) the environment
Positive drainage:	The continuous downward slope on all sides of the parcel from the finished ground surface immediately adjacent to the building to the property line
PUL:	Public Utility Lot: A utility corridor where public utilities are placed underground, often conveying surface drainage
Surface Drainage System:	Any facility or facilities associated with the drainage or control of Storm Drainage that is ultimately directed to a street or other City land or Storm Drainage System, and includes, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) a grass swale; b) a concrete or asphalt walkway, gutter or swale; c) a drainage control fence or structure; or d) the sloping and contouring of land to facilitate or control storm drainage
Swale:	A shallow, and often wet, tract of land sloped to convey surface drainage towards a City right-of-way

Purpose

The purpose of lot grading is to provide positive drainage away from buildings for the benefit of property owners.

The purpose of the Drainage Bylaw C-1241 is to regulate storm sewers and storm drainage in the City of Grande Prairie.

The purpose of the Lot Grading Bylaw C-1240 is to ensure all new residential and commercial development have positive drainage.

What should you do when problems arise on your own property?

Drainage problems that are contained on your own property are generally caused by settlement, either in your yard or around your foundation. Both can easily be fixed with some lot grading maintenance and filling in the settlement area to re-establish positive drainage.



Low areas in the middle of a yard will collect water during a rain event or snow melt.



Soil that has settled around the foundation provides an area for water to pool.

Refer to the informational lot grading material provided by the City about the Lot Grading Guidelines and Maintenance to ensure your lot is properly graded and maintained.

What should you do when problems arise between, or are caused by, adjacent **private** properties?

When a drainage problem spans over more than one private property, such as a rear or shared side lot swale not properly conveying water, it is important to discuss with the adjacent property owners so maintenance can be coordinated. Completing work to only your property may get rid of water on your property, but by doing so it could create a bigger problem for an adjacent property.



When a drainage problem on your property is believed to be caused by an adjacent private property, such as an obstruction in the drainage easement, open communication should be your first step as most problems can be resolved this way. Adjacent property owners have an equal interest in effective drainage.

1. Check your own grading and surface drainage pattern to ensure it's working properly.
2. Talk to your neighbours to work out a solution; they may not even realize there is a problem. If you need help in reflecting on what that conversation might look like, or to encourage a collaborative solution, you can contact the Provincial Court Civil Claims Mediation Program at (780) 833-4202.

Resorting to City enforcement before communication can often cause unnecessary tension between neighbours. However, if attempts to find a solution with your neighbours have not resulted in satisfactory drainage arrangements and you wish to have the City investigate please complete a **Witness Statement Form** for Drainage Bylaw/Lot Grading Bylaw violations. On receipt of your Witness Statement Form, a Lot Grading Inspector will examine surface drainage conditions on both properties to identify bylaw violations. Non-compliance notices will be sent for infractions of the Drainage Bylaw C-1241 and/or the Lot Grading Bylaw C-1240. Property owners must then take steps to bring their property into compliance with the bylaws.

You may live in an area that has a Lot Grading Plan that was approved prior to the implementation of the Lot Grading Bylaw. If this is determined to be the case, then submission of a recent Lot Grading Certificate for the premises will be required to assist in the evaluation of potential bylaw violations as well as grading conformance with the approved Lot Grading Plan.

The Lot Grading branch of Engineering Services does not have a mandate to resolve disputes; we offer information and an inspection service to identify violations of the Drainage and Lot Grading Bylaws.

What should you do when problems arise between your property and a **City property**, or are caused by a **City property**?

When a drainage problem spans between your property and a City owned property, such as backup in an adjacent PUL or an improperly graded PUL, communication with the Lot Grading branch is appropriate. Follow these steps:

1. Inspect your drainage to ensure it is not causing or contributing to the issue.
2. Document the issue with pictures and other supporting information.
3. Contact the Lot Grading branch either by phone or email. When contacting the City (by phone or email) please include information such as your address, photos of the issue, contact information and a brief description of the issue. Our contact information is provided at the end of this document or at www.cityofgp.com.
4. The Lot Grading branch will then contact you to better understand the issue and take the necessary steps to alleviate the problem.



Common Issues and Solutions

Many issues called into the Lot Grading branch are common issues that can easily and quickly be resolved without City involvement. Please take a look at these possible scenarios before calling the Lot Grading branch of the Engineering Services department.

Issue

My neighbour's downspout/sump pump outlet is discharging onto my property and causing flooding in my yard.

Solution

Communicate with your neighbour to determine the best point of discharge location and see if they can relocate the outlet to direct the water towards a City right-of-way. Remember that discharge points must not be less than 15cm from the property line.

If communication with your neighbour does not result in a positive outcome, contact Lot Grading to obtain a Witness Statement Form and file your complaint.

Issue

My neighbour has regraded their lot higher than mine and now there is standing water in my yard.

Solution

Usually property owners are unaware of neighbourhood drainage patterns where water from adjacent properties drain through an easement located in the backyards. Communicate your issue with your neighbour, often times people don't realize there is a problem, and try to have the drainage path re-established.

If communication with your neighbour does not result in a positive outcome, contact the Lot Grading department to obtain a Witness Statement Form and file your complaint.

Issue

My neighbour has built something in the drainage easement and now there is standing water in my yard.

Solution

Remember, anything that restricts or prevents flow through the drainage easement is considered an obstruction and is not permitted. Always try talking with your neighbour first, as they may not realize there is a drainage easement in their yard. The solution could be as easy as raising a storage shed onto skids so that water can flow under the shed.

If communication with your neighbour does not result in a positive outcome, contact Lot Grading to obtain a Witness Statement Form and file your complaint.

Issue

My sump pump is almost constantly running and discharging water.

Solution

Check the grading around your foundation to ensure it directs water away from the building and hasn't settled since construction. Ensure that your home's downspouts and sump pump outlet are extended past the "excavation zone", so the water is not recirculating through the foundation drains. Remember, in some locations where the water table is higher, the sump pump will run frequently; minimizing the water near your foundation is your best defense.

Things to Keep in Mind

1. Lot grading is the responsibility of the property owner.
2. Your lot grading requires regular maintenance to be able to convey surface water effectively.
3. Communicating with your neighbours will generally work better than involving the City for enforcement as enforcement can cause tension between neighbours.
4. Be prepared to perform some work to your own drainage when making a complaint regarding an adjacent private or City owned property.
5. The City of Grande Prairie does not provide funding to rectify private surface drainage problems.
6. The Lot Grading branch does not have a mandate to resolve disputes; we offer information and an inspection service to identify violations of the Drainage Bylaw C-1241 and the Lot Grading Bylaw C-1240.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Brochures:

Lot Grading Procedure
Lot Grading Inspections
Lot Grading Maintenance
Surface Drainage Problems

Website:

www.cityofgp.com

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