



# Owen Sound Boil Water Advisory

## A Community Response

### March 2026



**United Way**  
Bruce Grey  
Change starts here.

# Owen Sound Boil Water Advisory – March 2026

## The players

- Francesca Dobbyn, Executive Director, United Way of Bruce Grey
- Kevin McNabb, Director of Paramedic Services Grey County
- Mackayla McNabb, Kevin's daughter, grade 12 student, aspiring nurse
- Colleen Seaman-Trask, Executive Director Owen Sound Hunger and Relief Effort - OSHaRE
- City of Owen Sound staff: Tim Simmons – Owen Sound City Manager, Hedi Jenner – OS Emergency Management Co-ordinator
- Owen Sound Home Hardware owner John Anderson and truck driver Peter

Safe n Sound – Owen Sound's warming centre open 3 pm to 1 pm daily,

OSHaRE – Community meal program and hub for those in need downtown, open 1 pm to 3 pm 6 days a week

## Timeline

**March 14, 2026 at 6 pm** City of Owen Sound issues a precautionary boil water advisory

**6:25 pm** – I was alerted to the advisory by the Nurse Practitioner of the SOS team

- I texted Colleen at OSHaRE as this would impact their ability to prepare food.
- I utilized the SOS Whatsapp to notify the team of the advisory (team is on shift until 7 pm). This resulted in a full conversation about what resources were available for 'our folks'.
- Safe n Sound, The Coach and the Georgian Bluffs Apartment complex (generally known as "Stonetree") were identified as priority populations.

**6:50 pm** – called Safe n Sound and they were aware of the advisory, I asked them if they had water, they did not, they then asked if we could bring them water, I told them I was on my way!

**6:45 pm** – Brightshores staff advised that "Owen Sound has sold out of water" in the chat (it hadn't) as per their information

- Colleen indicates she's willing to come into OSHaRE's Food Share location to see what is available there

**6:48 pm** – Kevin advises he's getting information from Grey County CAO and is connecting with the City in regard to Stonetree

- Kevin offers his truck, or to get the SOS van (the new one that I call: The Beast)

**6:55** – we make a plan to meet up at Food Share, Kevin is 20 minutes out of town and needs to pick up the van



**7:20** – load up 3 large jugs of water from UWBG building and the one case of water left over from the recent Chamber of Commerce event, deliver to Safe n Sound along with the water pump I own for ‘cottaging with big jugs’.



**7:45 pm** – Meet up with Kevin and Colleen at Food Share, Kevin’s daughter Mckayla is driving his truck, Kevin is driving the SOS van. We load the van with all the water Food Share has, as well as pop and some candy. We feel offering other drinks will help stretch the water a bit.

- Call back to Safe n Sound as we need to get “inside” the front door of the Coach. We ask Safe n Sound if anyone attending Safe n Sound, is from the Coach and could they help us get in. We hear a few people holler they are on their way to help
- Drop water, pop and candy at The Coach (44 unit ‘boarding house’, shared bathrooms, no kitchens at all, all extremely low income)
- The tenant who met us there to let us in, offers to let the building know about the support and hang out with the supplies for a little while to ensure fair distribution



**8:15 pm** – drove back to Safe n Sound to also drop pop and candy there – as soon as the attendees see the van they come out to help unload, lots of gratitude

**8:30 pm** – Kevin and I pause to brainstorm where to get more water for Stonetree. There are 76 apartment units at the complex. We’ve talked to Zehrs and they are slammed, Jill was at Foodland and while they had a bit of water, people were going there too. It was a challenge to balance the broader needs of the residents of Owen Sound against the needs of the population we wanted to support.

I remembered that FreshCo was a new grocery store in town, and possibly people will have forgotten that it existed, it’s so new. So we headed to FreshCo



As

Kevin and I entered the grocery store and realized neither of us had quarters to “free the carts” the owner happened to follow us in and freed carts for us. We then explained what we were looking for and he took us to the right aisle.

We found a skid of water and it was exactly what was needed. I flagged down Peter the owner (this is when we found out he was the owner) and asked if we could buy the whole skid AND would FreshCo take the full skid either out front of the store or to a loading dock.

Naturally they are as helpful as anyone could be. We take the loaded carts out front and load the van up, and Mackayla takes Kevin’s van to the loading dock and we load up the truck.



**9:25 pm** - We pulled into Stonetree

We were then joined by Hannah (didn't get a last name) who was the on-duty Paramedic Supervisor. She was wonderful in chatting with all the seniors who had concerns and questions about the advisory.

Each unit got a case of water, and any unit that didn't answer or was dark, we left it at the door. The response of the residents was incredible

### **Note on Communications from the City**

I emailed the City Manager my cell phone number at 8:37 pm, letting him know we had taken care of Safe n Sound and the Coach but were challenged with supply in terms of finding enough water for Stonetree.

He responded by text to me about 10 minutes later and wanted to know how much we were looking for. They indicated they were in communication with Grey County, as we were as well through Kevin.

We wrapped up the effort around 10 pm.

We indicated to the City we needed 225 cases to give Stonetree 2 more cases each and the rest for the Coach and Safe n Sound. At this point the earliest the advisory would be lifted would be late in the day Monday. The City offered the Fire Department to also move water around.

I asked the City to produce a basic literacy level flyer on boiling water and being safe. They asked me to draft it, and they would finalize it. I sent that to them at 11:45 pm.

### **Sunday March 15, 2026**

I was not available Sunday 7-3:15 to assist with the emergency, but the SOS team was out and did a "pop-up" at Stonetree to connect with the residents and reassure them. They also checked on Safe n Sound and dropped more water bottles for the attendees to take with them. The 3 large bottles lasted them until I picked them up on Wednesday.

At 6 pm the City text to let us know the water had arrived, and we'd meet Monday to create a distribution plan



## Monday March 16, 2026

**11:00 am** - Met with the City, OSHaRE, Salvation Army, Safe n Sound, Grey County, Owen Sound Fire Department and CMHA

The conservative estimation of when the advisory would be over was Wednesday morning.

Bruce Power purchased 13 skids of water, which was matched by Ice River Springs, resulting in 2000 cases of water on 26 skids.

The group created a plan for distribution. Safe n Sound would access the depot at OSHaRE as they don't have space for a full skid.

Quantity	Item / Location	Action / Destination
2 skids	Salvation Army	Home Hardware* to deliver
1 skid	Transit	Fire to deliver
5 skids	OSHARE	Home Hardware* to deliver
2 skids	County	County to pick up
1 skid	Julie McArthur	County to pick up
1 skid	City facility	Fire to deliver
2 skids	Coach & Stonetree	Fire to deliver with SOS
2 skids	spare	
9 skids	Public	Public Works

Grey County and the Fire Department used pickup trucks to pick up skids of water and moved them around the City. The City then did a "drive thru" pick up with one case per car, Monday afternoon.



## Owen Sound Home Hardware

As part of the distribution planning, I realized we needed forklifts and we needed trucks, and I remembered that lumber yards have trucks WITH forklifts. I called John Anderson, the owner of the local Home Hardware and asked if they could help. After a moment's pause to process the request, they were happy to help.

We did a social media thank to them on the Monday that they shared out.

At 6 pm Monday the advisory was lifted.



Francesca,

Good Morning.

I wanted to extend a sincere thank you for the support you provided yesterday and for the incredible coordination work you pulled together on short notice.

Once I had the water donation confirmed and delivered, you bringing together OSHaRE, the Salvation Army, the YMCA, Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce, Safe-n-Sound and Grey County Paramedics and helping coordinate the Home Hardware truck made a real difference for residents across the city.

In my opinion , it was a clear example of how strong community partnerships come together when it matters most.

Your practical approach and willingness to jump in helped us respond quickly and thoughtfully.

Please pass along my thanks to everyone involved, and know how much it was appreciated.

With gratitude,

Tim

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City Manager

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