

Category: Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Billing and Collection Policy
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Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Billing and Collection Policy

Purpose:

The Municipality of Middlesex Centre recognizes the importance of having a written billing and collection policy for water, wastewater and stormwater service accounts. This policy incorporates good customer service and acceptable and efficient business practices, and promotes consistency and fairness to its customers.

Scope:

The Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Billing and Collection Policy applies to all customer water, wastewater and stormwater service accounts within the geographic boundaries of the municipality.

Objectives:

This policy is written to provide good customer service and provide effective and consistent interactions between Middlesex Centre staff and customers.

It is written in compliance with the Municipal Act, 2001, related Ontario Regulations made under the Act and applicable municipality by-laws, as amended from time to time.

Roles & Responsibilities:

Municipal staff assigned to the billing and collection of water, wastewater and stormwater accounts shall adhere to the policy and procedures detailed below.

Procedure:

Meter Reading

Meters are read directly by the municipality based on water consumption as registered on the customer's water meter.

Billing Cycle

Water, wastewater and stormwater bills will be sent a minimum of fifteen (15) days before the due date. If account holders opt to receive their bill through email billing or a similar service, or pay through a Pre-Authorized Payment Plan, their bill will be sent in the manner they selected a minimum of fifteen (15) days before the due date.

Due Date

Due dates will be the last working day of the month.

Payment

Water, wastewater and stormwater billings are payable as follows:

1. Mailing cheque payment directly to the municipal office.
2. Cash, cheque or debit payment at the municipal office during regular office hours, or after hours by using the mail slot (for cheque payments only).
3. Payment at any recognized bank or trust company.
4. Payment by telephone or internet banking.
5. Pre-authorized payment plan.

The receipt date will be the official date of payment.

Receipt date is defined as the date the municipality received the money either physically by Middlesex Centre staff or electronically received within the municipal bank account.

If paying by mail, telephone banking, at a recognized bank or trust company or online, the taxpayer assumes responsibility for late arrival.

Returned Cheques

In the event a cheque is returned from the bank (i.e., "Insufficient Funds" or "Stale-dated"), the customer shall pay applicable late payment penalty and interest charges and an additional fee, as established by municipal by-law as amended from time to time

Penalty and Interest Charges

In the event that payment is not received by the due date, a penalty charge shall be imposed on the first day of default following the due date and on the first business day of every calendar month thereafter until paid.

A request for relief of penalty will be first considered by the Financial Assistant. A penalty charge as a result of an error by the municipality shall be credited back to the customer equal to the amount charged. All other requests for relief of penalty must be in writing to the Director of Corporate Services.

The amount of penalty charge imposed will be in accordance with municipal fee by-law as amended from time to time.

Other Charges

The Corporate Services department may administer other charges as applicable in accordance to the municipal fee by-law as amended from time to time.

Tenanted Accounts

Tenant accounts set up prior to the date of this policy will continue to be recognized. Bills will be sent to the tenant until such time the tenant leaves or the account goes into arrears. Once a tenant leaves the property, or as a result of non-payment, any outstanding balance will be transferred to the property owner's property tax account; the account will then be set up in the name of the property owner.

All new water, wastewater and stormwater accounts that are established after the date of this policy will be set up in the property owner's name only and all charges will be the responsibility of the property owner.

Final Accounts

Where the municipality has been notified that a final meter reading is required as a result of a property sale, the final meter reading shall be done. Where a property has been sold, payment must be received within 30 days of the final bill being issued. Where a final bill has not been paid within 60 days, a statement will be sent to the previous property owner, giving them 14 days to make payment from the date of the statement.

Where the final bill still remains unpaid, a letter will be sent with a property tax statement showing the transfer of the unpaid balance to the current property owner's tax account.

Where a final bill has been sent in regard to a grandfathered tenanted property, and there is no response within 60 days, a letter will be sent to the property owner and the balance will be transferred to the property owner's tax account.

Collection/Accounts Transferred to Taxes

Statements for overdue accounts for property owners and tenants will be mailed out for balances that are 60 or more days overdue. A fee for statements sent will be added to the account in accordance with the municipal fee by-law as amended from time to time. Accounts that remain unpaid 14 days after the statements are mailed will be transferred to the property tax account. An

administration fee will be included as outlined in the municipal fee by-law which is amended from time to time.

A Payment Agreement may be reached if approved by the Manager of Finance or Director of Corporate Services. It is the responsibility of the customer to contact the municipality to arrange.

Neglected bills by the tenant will be the responsibility of the landlord and will be transferred to the property tax account in accordance with Section 398 (2) of the Municipal Act, 2001.

Usage and Billing Disputes

When a customer has contacted the municipality concerning a high water/wastewater bill, the account will be reviewed to determine if the high bill was the result of a billing error, faulty meter, or a leak.

Billing Error

If the contested bill is a result of a billing error, an adjustment will be made to the account, and a new bill will be issued.

If the problem is not a billing error, the Financial Assistant will forward the customer to the Water Department for the team to investigate the high consumption.

Faulty Meter

The customer may request for a meter to be tested to resolve a contested bill. A new meter will be installed during the period while the meter in question is being tested by an independent party. Should the meter be found to register accurately, the account holder will be responsible for the expense of removing and testing the meter, no further steps will be taken and the meter in question is reinstalled. If the meter is deemed to be a faulty meter, steps will immediately be undertaken to rectify the problem. The municipality will issue a new bill based on the average of the previous four (4) billing periods for the service address.

The municipality reserves the right to replace any meter, with no cost to the property owner, whether for upgrade purposes or not, without testing of the original meter.

Leak

If the contested bill is the result of a leak after the meter, the responsibility for water consumed after passing the meter is that of the property owner. A request in writing, to be considered for a water bill adjustment can be made to Council.

Negligence on behalf of the account holder may result in a decrease of the adjustment or complete denial of the adjustment.

Disconnection

The municipality reserves the right to shut off or reduce the supply of water to any premise that has unpaid fees and charges. The municipality shall restore the supply of water upon payment to

the municipality of such overdue amounts plus any applicable service charges, penalties and interest.

Small Balance Write-off

When an account has been finalized, if the outstanding balance is less than \$100.00, this amount may be written off at the discretion of the Director of Corporate Services or Manager of Finance, and no action will be taken to recover this amount. Where the Director of Corporate Services or Manager of Finance determines that certain accounts are uncollectible, the amounts may be written off within the approved budgeted amount each year.