



## Policy Manual

**Policy Number: Finance - 012**

**Subject: High Water Bill Adjustment Policy**

### **Policy Statement:**

To provide an opportunity for customers to request adjustments to water and wastewater use charges where a leak has been repaired in the water system on the customer's side of the water meter in a reasonable timeframe.

### **Related Policy Procedures/ Guidelines:**

#### **Background**

The Policy allows for staff to address those instances when an eligible metered water customer receives an abnormally high bill as a result of a plumbing failure. Though the customer is responsible to repair leaks on service plumbing, it was recognized that a high water/wastewater bill resulting from an unintentional water leak can present financial hardship to a customer. A leak adjustment policy will allow the City to address some of the high water bill issues, by educating customers on leak prevention and conservation, reducing the costs of dealing with high bill complaints, and providing limited financial assistance in dealing with the high bill.

#### **Definitions**

**Leak:** An unintentional water loss caused by broken and/or malfunctioning plumbing fixtures and/or pipes within a residence or building. A leak occurs when there is a failure of the plumbing system to do what it was designed to do.

**Unoccupied:** An unoccupied dwelling and/or building is a dwelling and/or building in which occupants are absent from the property for a time period of seventy-two (72) hours or more, due to such matters as vacations or prolonged illness.

**Vacant:** Regardless of the presence of furnishings, a vacant dwelling and/or building means the occupants have moved out with no intent to return. A newly constructed dwelling and/or building is also considered to be vacant after it is completed and before the occupants move in. A dwelling and/or building is also vacant when the occupants move out and before any new occupant moves in.

**Income Producing Residential Rental Property:** Exists where the property owner registered on title is different than the occupant and/or where a property pays business taxes.

## **Requirements/ Eligibility**

- The customer must complete in full the *Water Leak Adjustment Request Form* and provide documentation of repairs made prior to being approved for an adjustment within 120 calendar days of the high water bill.
- An adjustment may occur only after all leaks have been repaired and verified with an actual water meter read by the City's agent. Obtaining an actual meter reading may be necessary to verify whether leaks have been repaired and usage has returned to normal. The customer is responsible to make all repairs at their own costs and the City is not responsible for this cost.
- If an adjustment is granted, this is a one-time only adjustment per location per customer every 10 years.
- Adjustments will only be applicable to 1 billing cycle.
- Water usage MUST EXCEED 2 TIMES (200%) the AVERAGE consumption of the previous 12 months. If no history is available, meter readings will be obtained to project normal usage. If projection is not possible, actual consumption of similar customers will be used to determine normal usage for the adjustment calculation.
- Adjustments will be based on 50% of the water consumption amount exceeding the AVERAGE Consumption of the previous 12 months, up to a maximum adjustment of \$2000.
- Customers should be located within the geographic limits of the City, should be serviced by the City's water supply system and receive a bill from the City.

### **No adjustments will be granted where:**

- Usage above the customer's average monthly consumption is due to seasonal usage such as watering of sod, gardening, filling swimming pools or whirlpools, washing vehicles, etc. as this describes water services knowingly used by the customer;
- Water loss is due to theft, vandalism or construction damage as the responsibility to resolve these issues lies with the customer;
- The leak was caused by a third party from whom the customer is able to recover their costs;
- The dwelling and/or building is Unoccupied and/or Vacant for 72 hours or more.

- Customers have the responsibility to ensure the dwelling’s condition does not contribute to a failure of the plumbing system e.g. ensure that heating has been maintained. For extended absences, customers should consider shutting off the water supply (except where water is used for heating) and draining all the pipes and appliances.
- Where high water usage is identified from a “catch-up” billing following a minimum of 2 consecutively estimated billings. Actual meter readings are necessary for bills to reflect actual higher water usage to trigger the associated leak detection and water bill if the billing is based on an estimated read.
- Customers need to provide timely response and/or access to the property to allow for maintenance to metering equipment to eliminate estimated readings. The associated delay in obtaining an actual reading, occasionally results in unbilled consumption once an actual read is eventually obtained.
- Industrial, Commercial, Institutional and income producing rental properties, are not eligible.

**The following example illustrates how the adjustment is calculated based on rates in effect as of January 1, 2021:**

*For this example, the normal monthly average water consumption is 30 cubic meters per month.*

	<b>Water Consumption</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Dollar Amount</b>
<b>High Bill</b>			
1. Water Bill	400 c.m.	2.22	\$ 888.00
2. Wastewater Bill	400 c.m	2.03	<u>812.00</u>
			<b>\$1,700.00</b>
<b>Prior 12 Month Average</b>			
3. Water Bill	30 c.m.	2.22	\$ 66.60
4. Wastewater Bill	30 c.m	2.03	\$ 60.90
<b>Consumption Eligible for Adjustment</b>			
5. Water[1-3]	370 c.m.	2.22	\$ 821.40
6. Wastewater[2-4]	370 c.m.	2.03	\$ 751.10
<b>Leak adjustment 25% allowance</b>			
			\$ 410.70
Water Adjustment [5 *50%]			\$ 410.70

Wastewater Adjustment [6\*50%]

375.55

Total Water and Wastewater bill adjustment

**\$ 786.25**

<b>Date of Enactment:</b> January 1, 2020	<b>Related by By-law Number/ Staff Report Number:</b> 2019-721
<b>Amendment Dates:</b> June 22, 2021 (2021-427)	<b>Department Responsible for Review:</b> Finance
<b>Date of Next Review:</b> 2023	<b>Applicable Legislation/ Legislative Authority:</b>