



Council Report

Report Number: **CORP2024-017**
Meeting Date: July 23, 2024
Title: **High Water Bill Relief – 8 O'Connell Crt - Lindsay**
Author and Title: Linda Liotti, Manager, Revenue and Taxation

Recommendation(s):

That Report CORP2024-017 **High Water Bill Relief – 8 O'Connell Crt - Lindsay**, be received; and

That Council deny the request for financial relief of the high water bill incurred at **8 O'Connell Crt – Lindsay** during the period of January 1st to March 31st, 2024.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other:_____

Chief Administrative Officer:_____

Background:

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on May 7, 2024, a deputation seeking financial relief from a high water bill was presented by Michelle and Shawn Finley, property owners of 8 O'Connell Court, Lindsay.

COW2024-05.6.3

High Water Bill Request for 8 O'Connell Court, Lindsay

Michelle Finley

Shawn Finley

Michelle Finley provided an overview of a high water bill that they received in the amount of \$1700.00. She advised that they have investigated their property for possible leaks and no leaks were found, the water meter has also been replaced. The water billing amounts have since returned to normal and there is no explanation for the abnormal bill. She requested relief from the high water bill.

CW2024-121

Moved By Deputy Mayor McDonald

Seconded By Councillor Smeaton

That the deputation of Michelle Finley and Shawn Finley, **regarding a High Water Bill Request for 8 O'Connell Court, Lindsay**, be received; and

That this recommendation be brought forward to Council for consideration at the next Regular Council Meeting.

Carried

Further, at the Council meeting on May 21, the following resolution was carried:

CR2024-268

Moved By Deputy Mayor McDonald

Seconded By Councillor Perry

That the deputation of Michelle Finley and Shawn Finley, **regarding a High Water Bill Request for 8 O'Connell Court, Lindsay**, be received; and

That the request for high water bill relief be forwarded to Staff for review and report back by the end of Q3, 2024.

Carried

This report addresses that direction.

Rationale:

The scenario presented does not qualify for relief under the High Water Bill Adjustment policy as the property owner stated that there was no leak found, thereby, Section 11 - Obvious or Hidden Leaks is not applicable:

11. Obvious or Hidden Leaks

- 11.1 This policy applies to all property types where an obvious or hidden leak has occurred, causing high consumption, due to circumstances beyond the control of the property owner and do not include circumstances identified in Section 2.9 of this policy.
- 11.2 Reasonable effort to locate the leak and initiate repairs must be taken by the customer within 30 calendar days upon notification from the City of increased water usage.

The Utility Billing division received a phone message from Ms. Finley on April 8, 2024, advising that she had received a high water bill.

In a follow-up email on April 15, 2024, Ms. Finley advised there was an unknown cause to the high consumption and indicated that:

- i. no changes to plumbing
- ii. no irrigation system that may have caused a high bill
- iii. no water softener on site
- iv. no current leaks present
- v. was of the opinion consumption should have been less as the home was vacant for two weeks in February 2024 when the family was on vacation

Several emails were exchanged between the Utility Billing division staff and Ms. Finley regarding the matter between during the period of April to May 2024.

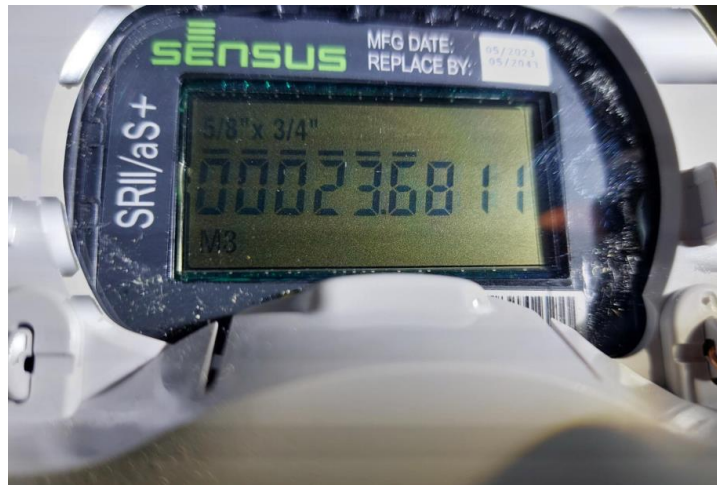
Key facts are as follows:

1. Water meter reading:

- City staff advised that the high consumption reading was based on the reading obtained from the meter that was removed and a current reading was obtained off the new meter, installed on March 7, 2024, which showed normal historical consumption.
- The replaced meter was part of the water meter replacement project and upgraded on March 7th. Utility Billing division staff requested the replaced meter

from the City's contractor and verified that the reading on the replaced meter matches the final reading (4781.50), thereby confirming the consumption of 324.50 m3.

- Ms. Finley provided a picture of the water meter reading on April 15, 2024, which showed a reading of 23.68, confirming consumption was normal between March 7 to April 15.



The below table summarizes the consumption for the past 5 years, showing, the period of high consumption boxed in red.

GILLOGLY, AIMEE MICHELLE AND FINLEY, SHAWN JAMES
8 O'CONNELL CRT
091-001180707-010

| Read Date | Estimate Flag | Previous | Current | Consumption (m ³) | Usage Days | Avg Daily Consumption (m3) | Comments |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------|---------|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|---|
| 15-Apr-24 | Picture from Resident | | 23.68 | 23.68 | 39 | 0.61 | NORMAL TO SLIGHT INCREASE IN USAGE |
| 7-Mar-24 | | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0 | | NEW METER - WATER METER REPLACEMENT PROGRAM |
| 7-Mar-24 | | 4457.00 | 4781.50 | 324.50 | 99 | 3.28 | READING OFF OF OLD METER |
| 29-Nov-23 | N | 4413.50 | 4457.00 | 43.50 | 90 | 0.48 | |
| 31-Aug-23 | N | 4370.50 | 4413.50 | 43.00 | 85 | 0.51 | |
| 7-Jun-23 | N | 4323.00 | 4370.50 | 47.50 | 98 | 0.48 | |
| 1-Mar-23 | N | 4280.50 | 4323.00 | 42.50 | 86 | 0.49 | |
| 5-Dec-22 | N | 4243.00 | 4280.50 | 37.5 | 83 | 0.45 | |
| 13-Sep-22 | N | 4188.50 | 4243.00 | 54.50 | 106 | 0.51 | |
| 30-May-22 | N | 4123.00 | 4188.50 | 65.5 | 90 | 0.73 | |
| 1-Mar-22 | N | 4086.00 | 4123.00 | 37.00 | 88 | 0.42 | |
| 3-Dec-21 | N | 4046.00 | 4086.00 | 40.00 | 86 | 0.47 | |
| 8-Sep-21 | N | 4006.00 | 4046.00 | 40.00 | 98 | 0.41 | |
| 2-Jun-21 | N | 3960.00 | 4006.00 | 46.00 | 90 | 0.51 | |
| 4-Mar-21 | N | 3922.00 | 3960.00 | 38.00 | 92 | 0.41 | |
| 2-Dec-20 | N | 3877.50 | 3922.00 | 44.50 | 90 | 0.49 | |
| 3-Sep-20 | N | 3843.00 | 3877.50 | 34.50 | 93 | 0.37 | |
| 2-Jun-20 | N | 3795.00 | 3843.00 | 48.00 | 91 | 0.53 | |
| 3-Mar-20 | N | 3756.00 | 3795.00 | 39.00 | 89 | 0.44 | |
| 5-Dec-19 | N | 3714.00 | 3756.00 | 42.00 | 86 | 0.49 | |
| 10-Sep-19 | N | 3676.50 | 3714.00 | 37.50 | 97 | 0.39 | |
| 5-Jun-19 | N | 3637.00 | 3676.50 | 39.50 | 92 | 0.43 | |
| 5-Mar-19 | N | 3599.00 | 3637.00 | 38.00 | 85 | 0.45 | |

2. Unknown cause to the high consumption period between meter read dates of November 29, 2023 and March 7, 2024.

- Fundamentally, the water meter is engineered on the concept of positive displacement, whereby, the water must flow through and displace the measuring component in the meter to capture the volume/consumption. The mechanism is not capable of speeding up or registering a significantly higher reading than actual.
- Ms. Finley was made aware of the City's standard procedure, namely, the old meter could be sent to an independent third party for accuracy testing. This would definitively prove whether the old meter was functioning accurately. A fee of \$225.00 plus shipping (as per the consolidated fee bylaw) would be charged, with the understanding of the following:
 - a) Should the testing results show that the meter was defective, the account would be refunded all fees/penalty/interest and a recalculation of the high consumption billing period would be undertaken whereby billing would be billed based on the 5-year average consumption of said quarter period.
 - b) Should the testing results confirm that the meter was operating within standard (within 98.5 and 101.5% accuracy), all charges to the account would stand and payment arrangements could be made to lessen the financial burden.
- Ms. Finley expressed frustration that she would be responsible to pay for the meter accuracy test. After consultation with Senior Management, the fee of \$225.00 plus shipping was waived, as a one-time courtesy.

3. Water Meter Calibration Accuracy Report

On May 1, 2024, Ms. Finley was provided, via email, that the meter calibration accuracy report from the independent third party confirming the old water meter was registering consumption at 99.89% for mid-flow, the standard flow rate for a residential service with a 5/8" x 3/4" water meter.

This result falls within the accepted accuracy standard of 98.5 to 101.5%, consequently, no adjustment would be made as the meter was proven to be functioning properly.

Other Alternatives Considered:

If Council's inclination is to provide relief, with consideration that this scenario falls outside of the High Bill Adjustment policy, the adjustment would be calculated using Section 11.13 which states:

Section 11. Obvious or Hidden Leaks

11.13 The adjustment will be calculated as 50% of the difference between the high water bill and the average consumption, to a maximum of \$1,500 as per Section 13.1.

Section 13. Adjustment Cap

13.1 Adjustments under this policy will be capped at \$1,500 for all properties.

In this case, the relief calculation is based on 140.85 m³ which represents 50% of the difference between the high consumption of 324.50 m³ and average consumption of 42.80 m³, resulting in a one-time adjustment in the amount of \$646.50. The following resolution should be passed accordingly:

That Council approves providing relief under the High Water Bill Adjustment Policy of \$646.50, as a one-time exemption for the same property owners;

Or

If Council's inclination is to provide relief, with consideration that this scenario falls outside of the High Bill Adjustment policy, Council can approve relief for an amount, save and except fixed charges of \$198.95 (\$98.10-water + \$100.85-sewer).

That Council approves providing relief in the amount of "x" as a one-time exemption for the same property owners.

Alignment to Strategic Priorities

This report is in alignment with the Kawartha Lakes Strategic Plan priority of good government.

Financial/Operation Impacts:

The Water and Wastewater rates are established to recover the cost of producing and delivering safe drinking water to property owners, and the collection and treatment of wastewater.

Providing relief to residents for water bills results in the City incurring a cost with no recovery revenue. This cost is then borne by the remaining user rate contributors throughout the City.

Attachments:

Appendix A – CP2017-006-High-Bill-Adjustment-Policy (v. Sept-24-2019)



Adobe Acrobat
Document

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Department Head: Sara Beukeboom, Director of Corporate Services