



Council Report

Report Number: CORP2025-002
Meeting Date: February 18, 2025
Title: High Water Bill Relief – 29 Wellington St - Lindsay
Author and Title: Linda Liotti, Manager, Revenue and Taxation

Recommendation(s):

That Report CORP2025-005 **High Water Bill Relief – 29 Wellington St - Lindsay**, be received; and

That Council deny the request for financial relief of the high water bill incurred at **29 Wellington St - Lindsay**, and billed during the period November 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on September 10, 2024, a deputation seeking financial relief from a high water bill was presented by Mr. Shane Sauve, property owner of 29 Wellington Street in Lindsay.

Further, at the Council Meeting on September 24, 2024, the following resolution was carried:

CR2024-471

Moved By Councillor Smeaton

Seconded By Councillor Richardson

That the deputation of Shane Sauve, **regarding a High Water Bill for Property Located at 29 Wellington Street, Lindsay**, be received; and

That the request for water bill relief be forwarded to Staff for review and report back by the end of Q1, 2025.

Carried

This report addresses that direction.

Rationale:

The scenario presented does not qualify for relief under the High Bill Adjustment Policy, as per Section 11, which states:

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.

Where Section 2.9 reads:

2.9 The following circumstances will not qualify for an adjustment to an account:

- Water loss, resulting in high consumption, from circumstances within the control of the property owner. Examples of such circumstances are, but not limited to, obvious or hidden leaks in the following:

- o Plumbing fixtures (taps, toilets, etc)
 - o Water softeners
 - o Irrigation system
 - o Icemakers
 - o Water powered sump pumps
- Water loss due to theft, vandalism or construction damage, as the responsibility to resolve these issues lies with the customer
 - A leak was caused by a third party from whom the customer is able to recover their costs
 - A dwelling and/or building is Unoccupied and/or Vacant for 72 hours or More
 - Costs can be recovered through an insurance claim

During the billing process, City staff undertake a data analysis exercise, whereby accounts showing abnormally high consumption (100m³, 2,000 ft³ or double previous periodic consumption) are identified for follow-up. Staff then send written correspondence to the property owner, alerting of the high consumption.

The above noted process was followed. Written correspondence dated January 26, 2024 was sent to Mr. Sauve, advising that the most recent water meter reading (Jan 8, 2024) was indicating high consumption.

Mr. Sauve subsequently contacted the City, on February 13, 2024. Utility billing staff advised him to conduct leak tests. Further, staff pointed out that there had been high consumption in the same billing period in the prior year, namely, November 1, 2022 to January 31, 2023, and inquired if there was a reason for this repeated high consumption. Mr. Sauve indicated he did not know what was causing the high consumption.

Mr. Sauve had many interactions with both utility billing and collections staff from February to August, 2024 resulting in various payment arrangements being made to help ease the financial burden of the large amount still owing on this account.

The key facts are as follows:

1. High Consumption Periods

The below table highlights the following:

Nov 1, 2023-Jan 21, 2024 high consumption period in red

Aug 1-Oct 31, 2023 and Nov 1, 2022-Jan 31, 2023 high consumption periods in orange

Read Date	Billing Period		Consumption (cubic feet)	Estimated	Usage Days	Avg. Daily Consumption (cubic feet)	Fixed Charges	Metered Charges	Bill Amount
	Start Date	End Date							
8-Jan-25	1-Nov-24	31-Jan-25	1,520.00	N	93	16.34	\$ 202.20	\$ 204.45	\$ 406.65
7-Oct-24	1-Aug-24	31-Oct-24	2,320.00	N	94	24.68	\$ 202.20	\$ 312.06	\$ 514.26
5-Jul-24	1-May-24	31-Jul-24	2,810.00	N	93	30.22	\$ 202.20	\$ 377.97	\$ 580.17
3-Apr-24	1-Feb-24	30-Apr-24	2,880.00	N	86	33.49	\$ 200.61	\$ 383.19	\$ 583.80
8-Jan-24	1-Nov-23	31-Jan-24	13,100.00	N	88	148.86	\$ 197.25	\$ 1,702.74	\$ 1,899.99
12-Oct-23	1-Aug-23	31-Oct-23	9,690.00	N	94	103.09	\$ 197.25	\$ 1,259.51	\$ 1,456.76
10-Jul-23	1-May-23	31-Jul-23	2,860.00	N	87	32.87	\$ 197.25	\$ 371.75	\$ 569.00
14-Apr-23	1-Feb-23	30-Apr-23	2,500.00	N	78	32.05	\$ 192.45	\$ 315.73	\$ 508.18
26-Jan-23	1-Nov-22	31-Jan-23	17,650.00	N	112	157.59	\$ 192.45	\$ 2,229.02	\$ 2,421.47
6-Oct-22	1-Aug-22	31-Oct-22	3,600.00	N	94	38.30	\$ 192.45	\$ 454.64	\$ 647.09
4-Jul-22	1-May-22	31-Jul-22	3,070.00	N	91	33.74	\$ 192.45	\$ 387.71	\$ 580.16
4-Apr-22	1-Feb-22	30-Apr-22	2,590.00	N	90	28.78	\$ 190.99	\$ 323.86	\$ 514.85
4-Jan-22	1-Nov-21	31-Jan-22	3,020.00	N	95	31.79	\$ 187.80	\$ 369.44	\$ 557.24
1-Oct-21	1-Aug-21	31-Oct-21	2,730.00	N	93	29.35	\$ 187.80	\$ 333.96	\$ 521.76
30-Jun-21	1-May-21	31-Jul-21	2,500.00	N	91	27.47	\$ 187.80	\$ 305.82	\$ 493.62
31-Mar-21	1-Feb-21	30-Apr-21	2,170.00	N	85	25.53	\$ 184.67	\$ 259.72	\$ 444.39
5-Jan-21	1-Nov-20	31-Jan-21	2,430.00	N	97	25.05	\$ 183.09	\$ 287.56	\$ 470.65

2. Unknown cause to the high consumption period between meter read dates of October 12, 2023 to January 8, 2024.

- Fundamentally, the water meter is engineered such that 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 the actual.
- The water meter located at 29 Wellington Street is part of the City's water meter replacement project as it is an older meter and measuring consumption in cubic feet (imperial) versus cubic metres (metric). Further, it is an industry fact that as meters age, they tend to under register consumption.
- Proactively, City staff fast-tracked this into the water meter replacement program. A total of three (3) notices have been sent to the property owner requesting compliance with this mandatory program:

First notice - February 23, 2024
Second notice - October 10, 2024
Third/final notice - February 4, 2025

To date, the property owner has not scheduled an appointment to have the water meter replaced.

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 2,920.00 ft³ which represents 50% of the difference between the high consumption of 13,100.00 ft³ and average consumption of 7,260 ft³, resulting in a one-time adjustment in the amount of \$392.77. The following resolution should be passed accordingly:

That Council approves providing relief under the High Water Bill Adjustment Policy of \$392.77, 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 (\$197.25).

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