



Council Report

Report Number: CORP2025-009
Meeting Date: April 22, 2025
Title: High Water Bill Relief – 55 Colborne St E - Lindsay
Author and Title: Linda Liotti, Manager, Revenue and Taxation

Recommendation(s):

That Report CORP2025-009 **High Water Bill Relief – 55 Colborne Street East - Lindsay**, be received; and

That Council deny the request for financial relief of the high water bill incurred at 55 Colborne St E - Lindsay, and billed during the period of July 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024.

Department Head: _____

Financial/Legal/HR/Other: _____

Chief Administrative Officer: _____

Background:

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 4, 2025, a deputation seeking financial relief from a high water bill was presented by Mr. Mackenzie Baker, property owner of 55 Colborne Street East, in Lindsay.

Further, at the Council Meeting on February 18, 2025, the following resolution was carried:

CR2025-049

Moved By Deputy Mayor McDonald

Seconded By Councillor Richardson

That the request from Mackenzie Baker and Devon Thompson for a water bill reduction for 55 Colborne Street East, Lindsay, be referred to Staff for review and report back to Council by the Regular Council Meeting of April 22, 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

The property owner, Mr. Mackenzie Baker, contacted the Utility Billing Division on October 21, 2024, advising of receipt of a high water bill for the period of July 1 to September 30, 2024. He indicated that he had hired a plumber to investigate and no leak was identified. City staff requested that Mr. Baker provide a current meter reading, which was done, while on the phone with Mr. Baker. He provided a meter reading of 706.90. This reading confirmed the meter register was operating normally as the reading had progressed. A calculation of average daily consumption was completed which indicated consumption had normalized. City staff reviewed the functionality of the water meter and explained that the reading he just provided indicated that the consumption was back to normal.

Mr. Baker indicated he did not consume this water and was adamant that there was no leak. He advised he would refuse to pay the water bill. The matter was escalated to the Manager of Revenue & Taxation.

On October 29, 2024, the Manager of Revenue & Taxation left a voice mail for Mr. Baker advising City staff in utility billing see this pattern of high consumption on a regular basis when there is a leak in the home, typically as a result of toilet leak. A request was made to book an appointment so the water meter technician could complete an on-site visit and obtain consumption data from the meter register.

Mr. Baker and City staff exchanged several voice mail messages and emails, however, the matter has remained unresolved, as Mr. Baker's position is that he did not consume the water and therefore has not paid any water bills since July 30, 2024.

The key facts are as follows:

1. High Consumption Periods

The below table highlights the following:

July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024 high consumption period in red

October 21, 2024 – reading provided by Mr. Baker, which confirms consumption had normalized in orange

Read Date	Billing Period		Due Date	Consumption (cubic metres)	Estimated	Usage Days	Avg. Daily Consumption (cubic metres)	Fixed Charges	Metered Charges	Bill Amount
	Start Date	End Date								
28-Feb-25	1-Jan-25	31-Mar-25	30-Apr-25	25.00	N	91	0.27	\$ 205.54	\$ 121.21	\$ 326.75
29-Nov-24	1-Oct-24	31-Dec-24	31-Jan-25	22.60	N	81	0.28	\$ 202.20	\$ 107.35	\$ 309.55
21-Oct-24	called in by Mr. Baker			9.90		41	0.24			
9-Sep-24	1-Jul-24	30-Sep-24	31-Oct-24	156.50	N	104	1.50	\$ 202.20	\$ 743.37	\$ 945.57
28-May-24	1-Apr-24	30-Jun-24	31-Jul-24	24.70	N	90	0.27	\$ 202.20	\$ 117.32	\$ 319.52
28-Feb-24	1-Jan-24	31-Mar-24	30-Apr-24	23.00	N	84	0.27	\$ 198.95	\$ 106.83	\$ 305.78
6-Dec-23	1-Oct-23	31-Dec-23	31-Jan-24	5.60	N	28	0.20	\$ 115.78	\$ 25.71	\$ 183.49
8-Nov-23				0.00		0		* above bill includes \$42 New Account Fee		

2. Unknown cause to the high consumption period between meter read dates of May 28, 2024 to September 9, 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.
- Meters are calibrated and tested before they are shipped to the City and installed. The average functional life of a water meter is 30 years.
- The water meter at 55 Colborne St E was installed on October 16, 2017, therefore is only 8 years old. It is well within its functional life and, hence, is not targeted for replacement.

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 66.30 m³ which represents 50% of the difference between the high consumption of 156.50 m³ and average consumption of 23.90 ft³, resulting in a one-time adjustment in the amount of \$314.93. The following resolution should be passed accordingly:

That Council approves providing relief under the High Water Bill Adjustment Policy of \$314.93, 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 (\$202.20).

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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