



Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection

Policy Manual Section: Finance - General

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Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the billing and collection process of water and wastewater billing for Town of LaSalle residents and businesses.

Policy Statement:

To establish a set of billing and collection practices that are fair and equitable and to ensure consistent processes are followed.

Scope:

The Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy applies to all water and wastewater service accounts within the geographic boundaries of the Town of LaSalle. Town staff assigned to the administration of water and wastewater accounts shall adhere to the policy and procedures detailed below.

Policy:

Meter Reading

Meters are read directly by the Town based on water consumption as registered on your water meter. The meter reads are collected from an antenna located on the Town's tower. The antenna automatically receives meter reads from transmitters attached to each water meter throughout the Town.

Billing

Who will be Billed



Bills will be issued to property owners only. The Town will accept payments from tenants / other non-owners, however it will be the property owner's responsibility to ensure that bills are paid on time. Bills can be mailed to any address that the owner chooses if the request is received by the Town in writing.

Paper bill, emailed bill and e-billing

Customers will have the option to have a paper bill mailed to them, electronic bill emailed to them or an e-bill provided to their Vadim open account (customer must create a user ID and password to login to their Vadim Open account). In order to receive their bills through email, customers will have to provide their email address to the Town's Customer Service Representatives. Customers are responsible to inform the Town if their email address changes. If an email comes back as "undeliverable" to the customer's email address, a paper bill will be mailed to the customer.

Billing cycles

Residential water and wastewater customers will be billed quarterly in January, April, July and October based on the following schedule:

Usage Period	Bill Issued	Bill due date
January 1 through March 31	First week of April	Last Friday of April
April 1 through June 30	First week of July	Last Friday of July
July 1 through September 30	First week of October	Last Friday of October
October 1 through December 31	First week of January	Last Friday of January

Commercial, industrial, institutional and multi-residential water and wastewater customers will be billed monthly for the previous month's usage. The due date will fall on the last Friday of the month that the bill was issued.

Payment of Accounts

Payments received will be allocated to the customer's account to pay off various charges in the following order: miscellaneous fees, NSF fees, interest charges, principal balances. For each of these categories, the payment will be allocated to the oldest outstanding balances first.



Methods of payment

- Pre-authorized payments (Payments will be automatically deducted from customer's bank account on the due date of each bill)
- Pay at your bank
- Pay online
- Post dated cheques
- Payments at counter via cash, cheque or debit
- Equal monthly payments (See below for details)

Equal Monthly Payments

Residential customers may register for equal monthly payments. Customers registered for equal monthly payments will receive a notice indicating their monthly payment for the year, which is calculated based on the average usage history over the past year. There will be a catch-up notice each fall indicating a surplus or deficit balance on the customer's account. The surplus or deficit will be rolled into the following year's equal monthly payment calculation (surplus balances will result in lower monthly payments and deficits will result in higher monthly payments in the following year). Payments for customers who wish to register for the equal monthly payment plan must be pre-authorized. Payments will be automatically deducted from customer's bank account on the 11th of each month or the following business day if the 11th falls on a weekend or holiday.

Late payment charges

Late payments will receive a penalty of 1.25% per month. After a payment is missed for two months, a reminder notice will be mailed out. If payment is missed for two bills in a row, the total balance due will be transferred to the property owner's tax bill along with a \$50 processing fee one month after the second bill is issued. The outstanding balance must be paid in full to prevent the transfer to the tax bill.

The outstanding balance on a payment that has not been received in full will be considered a missed payment for the outstanding amount.

Late payment charges are adjusted only if it was charged as a result of the Town's error or omission. The Supervisor of Revenue, or designate, will review the situation to determine if the error was a result of action taken by the municipality.



Dishonoured Payments

If the Town receives a dishonoured payment, a \$50 charge will be processed on the customers account.

If during any calendar year the Town receives two (2) or more dishonoured payments, the customer will be notified in writing that the Town will only accept payment on the subject amount in the form of cash, certified cheque, money order or debit, until the customer has established a good payment record for one (1) year.

Ownership Changes

Where the municipality has been notified in writing that a final meter reading is required as a result of a property sale, the final meter reading shall be done on the day requested. The Town requires the request a minimum of two business days prior to the requested meter read date. Water certificates to identify water bills in arrears will be issued for \$75 in advance of the final bill.

Final bills will be mailed to the address provided with the request for final meter reading.

Where a property has been sold, payment must be made within 30 days of the final bill being issued.

Previous home owners are responsible to provide the Town's customer service representatives with the new home owner's name in order for the name to be updated in the utility billing system.

Temporary Water Turn Off and On

A minimum of five (5) business days' notice is required for the temporary water turn off and turn on unless it is an emergency. The customer designate must be in attendance while the service is turned off or on.

During the period that the water is turned off, the customer is responsible for the fixed monthly charges.

Fees will be charged based on time and material used to turn the water on or off.

Schedule of Fees

Fees in relation to the water and wastewater bills are established by by-law and are approved annually during the adoption of the budget.



Water and Wastewater Usage and Billing Disputes

When a customer has contacted the Town concerning a high water/sewer 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, a work order will be prepared and Town staff will visit the property to investigate the high consumption. Town staff will first confirm the outside and inside meter readings match. Should the meter and outside reader vary from the billed amount, reflecting an error during the meter reading process, an adjustment will be made to the account, and a new bill will be issued. Should the meter and the outside reader reflect increased consumption, Town staff will notify the owner to further investigate for internal leaks.

Faulty Meter

The account holder 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. The meter being tested will not be reinstalled. Should the meter be found to register accurately or in favour of the account holder, the account holder will be responsible for the expense of removing and testing the meter. If the meter is found to register in favour of the Town or if the meter is deemed to be a faulty meter, steps will immediately be undertaken to rectify the problem, and a new bill will be issued based on the average of the previous four (4) billing periods for the service address.

The Town 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. Only residential properties will be considered for an adjustment.



The level of relief to be granted will be the result of reducing the usage rates in block 2 and block 3 to the Town's block 1 rate, unless otherwise deemed appropriate to reduce usage to the Town's bulk rate.

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

The adjustment shall be in the form of a credit applied to the account for amounts less than \$500. For adjustments greater than \$500, a cheque will be issued.

No rebates will be made within 60 months of a previous rebate for an individual property unless ownership changed within the 60 month period.

Policy Review

This policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as required. This policy must be reviewed by the stated review date and approved by the responsible department.