

WATER TALK

A Publication of the Halifax Regional Water Commission
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Water and Wastewater Merger

As a result of direction from Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Council and the Halifax Regional Water Commission (HRWC) Board, staff has commenced activities to realize a combined water and wastewater utility under the jurisdiction of HRWC. The merger is viewed as an excellent opportunity to deliver water and wastewater services in an integrated manner with a commitment to long-term sustainability.

The Water Commission has a very successful history since its formation in 1945 and more recently, with metro amalgamation in 1996. In 1996, the Commission was able to integrate three water utilities into one to continue its mission with a regional mandate. Many of the successes the Commission achieved since then come from a dedicated staff committed to the delivery of high quality water and service, and a business focus on asset management. We expect the same tradition to continue as we embark on a new mission to manage a water and wastewater utility.

In terms of management, the Commission has always taken a long term view on the operation and maintenance of infrastructure and has received international recognition for its efforts. The quality of water produced by HRWC has always been ranked amongst the highest in the nation while maintaining affordable rates for customers. This will also be the goal for wastewater when the system is transferred to the Commission under the regulatory authority of the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB). The NSUARB has always ensured that revenue and expense projections are justified and corresponding rates are equitable, fair and reasonable.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we chart new waters with stewardship responsibility for both water and wastewater assumed by the Commission.

Water Rate Increase April 1, 2007

The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) in its decision dated November 8, 2006, approved water rate increases effective April 1, 2007 and 2008. These increases were lower than the Commission had applied for in its rate application of December, 2005. The increases are needed to cover the increase in operating cost with inflation and allow the Commission to comply with new provincial regulations and increase the level of infrastructure renewal.

The April 1, 2007 increase for domestic customers having a meter size of 5/8" (15 mm) will amount to \$2.39 on the average quarterly bill of 60 cubic metres (60,000 litres) or an increase of 4.16%. The increase is comprised of a minimum base charge of \$1.37 and a consumption rate increase of \$1.02 per quarter. This will bring the average annual water charge from \$230.04 to \$239.60 for domestic customers. The new rates will be prorated for water service after April 1, 2007 and will appear on billings after April 1.

As shown in the table below, in comparison to other major cities across Canada, Halifax water consumers enjoy one of the lowest rates for treated water. The table is based on an average annual consumption of 240 cubic metres .

Yellowknife	\$714.82
Vancouver	\$329.00
Victoria	\$272.50
Edmonton	\$334.82
Calgary	\$392.71
Regina	\$346.25
Saskatoon	\$258.07
Winnipeg	\$321.95
Toronto	\$340.04
Ottawa	\$217.71
Saint John	\$299.10
Moncton	\$324.48
St. John's	\$400.00
Halifax	\$239.60

The water bill contains separate charges for water and pollution control. Water charges are comprised of a base charge and a commodity charge. This money is used for the operation of the water system. Pollution control charges are located below the water charges, on the bill, and are comprised of an environmental protection charge and a wastewater management charge. These charges are authorized by HRM Council and are both based on the amount of water consumed. These charges are billed and collected by the HRWC for HRM.

With this water rate increase, the average domestic water bill including water and wastewater for customers having a 5/8" (15 mm) meter using 60 cubic metres (there are 1000 litres in a cubic metre), will average \$128.07 per quarter or \$512.30 per year.

While rates have increased over the past number of years, they are still among the lowest in Canada for utilities that are delivering fully treated water as the Commission is. The cost for both water and pollution control averages \$1.40 per day – a great value when you consider it is delivered to your home on demand and removed after you are finished using it.

Further details can be found on our website at www.hrwc.ca or by calling our customer service line at 490-4820 Monday thru Friday, 8am to 8pm.

Harbour Solutions Project... Construction Update

Construction activity on the Harbour Solutions Project is underway in Halifax, Dartmouth and Herring Cove.

In Halifax, the sewage collection system (SCS) is essentially complete. Final connection of the new and existing SCS components (piping, pumping stations, combined sewer overflow chambers, one km tunnel and related infrastructure) to the Halifax wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) are underway and will continue through the winter. These connections will allow for pre-commissioning (systems testing) of the Halifax WWTF in 2007.

As mentioned above, a major component of the Halifax SCS is the one kilometre sewage tunnel/pipe below downtown Halifax. This sewage pipe runs from the foot of Sackville and Lower Water Streets to the Halifax WWTF located at the corner of Barrington and Cornwallis Streets. Construction of the three-metre diameter pipe began in November of 2003 and is now complete. It was constructed using a tunnel boring machine which operated at a depth of approximately 23 metres below the surface. Having a major traffic route closed for such an extended period of time would have proved a major inconvenience for commuters and businesses. Therefore, the tunnel concept was employed to reduce the impact on traffic and businesses along this corridor over such an extended period of time. Little did folks know what what was going on 23 metres below them.

In Dartmouth, SCS work is on-going from north Dartmouth to just south of the Woodside ferry terminal. Extensive structural work continues at the Dartmouth WWTF along with related mechanical and electrical systems. The Dartmouth WWTF is located on the south end of the former Canadian Coast Guard lands in the Woodside area of Dartmouth.

In Herring Cove, the gated access driveway has been roughed in and site excavation is well underway at the WWTF site at Hospital Point. The next phase of construction at the Herring Cove WWTF will involve extensive structural work.

The third and final component of the Harbour Solutions Project is the BioSolids Processing Facility (BPF) located in Aerotech Park. The BioSolids Processing Facility is scheduled to be operational to coincide with the start-up of the Halifax wastewater treatment facility.

An integral part of the Harbour Solutions Project is HRM's Pollution Prevention Program. The P2 program, as it is known, focuses on reducing/eliminating pollution before it occurs. The P2 team has been working to educate businesses and residents on the need to properly dispose of hazardous products at home and work. The proper disposal of fats, oils, grease, paints, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, etc., in your home and office is an important component of the success of the Harbour Solutions Project. Wastewater treatment facilities the world over are designed to treat human waste only. By properly disposing of these materials you can help ensure our existing wastewater treatment facilities, as well as the three new facilities being constructed as part of the Harbour Solutions Project, operate as efficiently as possible and provide the maximum environmental benefit to our harbour.

Remember, Only Rain In The Storm Drain &
Think Before You Pour It Down The Sink!

For more information on HRM's environmental initiatives such as the Harbour Solutions Project, Pollution Prevention Program, composting & recycling and Pesticide By Law, check your HRM Stewardship Calendar, visit www.halifax.ca and follow the Naturally Green links, or call 490-4000.

Winter Weather Reminders

Be sure to take steps to protect vulnerable parts of your home or property whenever freezing weather is forecast.

- Locate and mark the incoming valve on the main water supply line for quick access in case of a burst pipe; and check for proper operation. This will also be helpful if the water needs to be turned off for repairs.
- Maintain heat inside a vacant house or turn off the water.
- Water lines exposed to cold air such as in a crawl space or other unheated space, should be insulated or wrapped in heat tape.
- Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame or torch. The easiest and safest way to thaw a frozen pipe is to heat the room or use a hair dryer on low heat along the pipe. Placing a warm towel or rag around the pipe may also do the trick. Remember, the pipe may already be broken and when thawed, it will leak.

If you suspect you have a frozen water line or meter, call us for help. Staff are available 24 hours a day and will respond as soon as possible. The after-hours emergency number is **490-6940**.

Water Talk is an information communication between the Halifax Regional Water Commission and its customers. Published at least twice a year, it will cover topics relevant to the operation of the water utility as well as other matters of interest. Your comments are welcome.