



## Municipality of Greenstone Policy Manual

<b>Subject:</b> Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy	
<b>Number:</b> 25-47	<b>Section:</b> Corporate Services / Finance
<b>Original Effective Date:</b> September 8, 2025	<b>Last Revised/Approved Date:</b> September 8, 2025
<b>Approval Authority:</b> Resolution #25-245	

### **Purpose:**

This policy outlines the billing and collection process of water and wastewater accounting for the Municipality of Greenstone.

This policy ensures fair and equitable treatment of ratepayers related to water and wastewater accounts.

### **Application:**

The policy applies to all water and wastewater service accounts within the geographic boundaries of Greenstone.

Municipal staff assigned to the administration of water and wastewater accounts shall adhere to the policy detailed below.

### **Policy Statement/s:**

The Municipality of Greenstone is committed to the establishment of a set of billing and collection practices for water and wastewater accounts that are fair and equitable and to ensure consistent processes are followed.

### **Definitions:**

**"Average Monthly Consumption"** is equal to the average of one-year's consumption for the subject property.

**“Business Days”** means Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding statutory holidays.

**“Municipality”** means The Corporation of the Municipality of Greenstone.

**“Collection Agency”** means an accredited collection company appointed by the Municipality to collect debts owing to the Municipality from delinquent customers.

**“Customer”** means any owner, occupant, lessee, tenant or any other person purchasing or receiving services from the Municipality;

**“Council”** means the Council of the Municipality of Greenstone.

**“Dishonored payments”** occur when a payee attempts payment but has insufficient funds to cover the transaction.

**“Due Date”** means the last date by which an invoice must be paid by a customer in accordance with the terms of payment on the Municipality’s Invoice.

**“Fees & Charges By-Law”** means the current schedule of applicable fees, rates or other charges for the Services, which may be amended by Council from time to time.

**“High Consumption”** occurs when water consumption exceeds two times the customer’s average consumption and is greater than 15 cubic meters per month.

**“Invoice”** means a bill issued by the Municipality to a customer indicating the amount owing over a single billing period for the delivery of water and sanitary sewer, meter service charges and fees.

**“Meter”** means an apparatus for measuring the quantity of water used.

**“Owner”** means an owner of a Building or of lands, or their agent/designate.

**“Primary Account Holder”** is an individual(s) whose name(s) are listed on the “Billing Designate Application”, the account and on the water utility invoice. The Primary Account Holder(s) is the main point of contact for the Municipality and the Payee(s) of any refund cheques issued unless otherwise instructed in writing by all the tenants listed on the “Billing Designate Application”.

**“Payment Plan”** means a verbal and/or written and signed payment arrangement authorized by appropriate Municipality staff negotiated with a customer for repayment of a past due amount.

**“Receivables”** means any monies owed to the Municipality for goods and/or services rendered other than property tax.

**"Residential Properties"** are classified as residential but not including properties with multiple units serviced by a meter.

**"Services"** means all water and sanitary sewer services supplied by the Municipality.

**"Water & Sewer Rates By-Law"** means the current schedule of applicable flat rate and metered fees for water and sewer usage, which is amended annually by Council.

**Policy:**

## **WATER METERS**

### **Meter Reading – Water Consumption**

Water consumption for billing purposes shall be collected as registered on water meters. Where a meter is not in place, charges will be applied on a flat rate per the Municipality's Water & Sewer Rate By-Law.

All customers are required to grant authorized employees of the Municipality access to the reader and water meter at the service address. Meters and readers must be accessible at all times. If a meter reading cannot be obtained a notice card will be left at the service address to contact the Municipality.

### **Water and Wastewater Usage and Billing Disputes**

When a customer has contacted the Municipality or its agent concerning a high water/wastewater bill, the account will be reviewed to determine if the high bill was the result of a billing error, faulty meter, or a leak.

Where a billing error is confirmed, an adjustment will be made to the account and a new bill will be issued.

Where a discrepancy in the meter read to the actual meter read occurs resulting in a billing error, an adjustment will be made to the account, and a new bill will be issued.

### **Faulty Meter**

Any customer may, upon written application to the Municipality, have the Water Meter checked for accuracy of registration. The meter will be removed for testing and a new meter will be installed.

Where the Meter is found to register correctly, slow or not to exceed three per cent (3%) in favor of the Municipality when tested in accordance with Section 4.2.8 of ANSI/AWWA C700 and AWWA Manual M6, Water Meters – Selection, Installation, Testing, and Maintenance, any expense of removing and testing of the Meter will be paid for in full by the customer.

Where the Meter is found to register in excess of three per cent (3%), a refund will be made to the customer equal to such excess percentage of the amount of the account for the period of six (6) months prior to such testing of the Meter.

The Municipality 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.

### **Water Leaks**

The customer is responsible for water consumption, including consumption resulting from any leak after the meter.

Where a high consumption bill occurs as a result of a leak, residential water account customers may apply in writing to be considered for a water bill adjustment. The request must be submitted within 90 days following the issue of the high consumption bill. High consumption due to filling a pool or spa, irrigation system or other similar uses of water is not eligible for adjustment.

To be eligible for an account adjustment, the customer must show proof, satisfactory to the Municipality, of the leak repair.

The billing adjustment is calculated at 85% of the excess water use over the customer's average consumption over a maximum two-month period.

Any adjustment will be calculated using the rates that were in effect at the time of the high consumption.

No rebates will be made within 36 months of a previous rebate for an individual property unless ownership changed within the 36 month period; and no more than two leak adjustments will be considered within a 6 year timeframe.

The property cannot be vacant or unattended during the timeframe when the leak occurred.

Water loss due to theft, vandalism, or construction damage is not eligible for an adjustment.

### **Service Disruptions**

Billing adjustments will not be made for any service disruptions due to planned or unplanned maintenance activities.

## **BILLING**

### **Schedule of Fees**

Fees in relation to water and wastewater billing and collection are established by the annual Water & Sewer Rates By-law.

## **Billing Cycle**

Water and Wastewater will be billed on a monthly basis. The Municipality will make a reasonable effort to ensure that all accounts which are allocated a water meter will be read one week prior to the billing cycle.

Water and Wastewater bills will be mailed a minimum of fifteen (15) calendar days before the due date.

Due dates will be the last Friday of the month.

## **Bill Issuance**

Billing accounts will be issued to registered property owner and bills will be issued in the name(s) of the registered property owners. The Municipality may accept payments from tenants/other non-owners; however the property owner is, in all circumstances, financially responsible for all water and wastewater fees and charges incurred against the property.

Bills will be issued electronically, where possible, if the property owner has registered through the Municipality's electronic billing platform. Customers shall be responsible to provide updated accountholder information to the Municipality and any service provider.

The Municipality of Greenstone, directly or through its agent, reserves the right to change the method of bill delivery with advance notice.

Where billing errors have resulted in over-billing, the Customer shall be credited with the amount erroneously billed for the relevant period, inclusive of any interest that has accrued, but not exceeding twelve (12) months. Where billing errors have resulted in under-billing, the Customer shall be charged the amount erroneously not billed for a period not exceeding twelve (12) months.

## **Billing Format**

Customers will have the option to have a paper bill mailed to them or an e-bill provided through the electronic billing platform to their Vadim open account (customer must create a user ID and password to login to their Vadim Open account).

## **Pre-Authorized Payment Plan**

Payment may be made by Pre-Authorized Payment Plan if a customer provides completed Pre-Authorized Payment Plan Application and a void cheque or official form provided by bank, encoded with the bank's transit number, bank number, and bank account number belonging to the Account Holder. Pre-Authorized payments will be withdrawn on the due date, and for the amount due, as indicated on the customer's bill.

## **Payment of Accounts**

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

Where payment is made by mail, payment will be deemed to be made on the date payment is received by the Municipality. Where payment is made on-line or by telephone banking the payment will be deemed to be made on the date payment is received by the Municipality.

### **Late Payment Charges and Arrears**

A penalty charge at a rate of 1.25% per month shall be imposed on all outstanding bills not paid by the specified due date as per the Municipality's current Fees & Charges By-Law and Water & Sewer Rates By-Law.

Adjustments to late payment charges may only be considered where the charge resulted from an administrative error by the Municipality.

Account arrears that are otherwise deemed uncollectible shall be transferred to the tax roll for the property along with applicable fees and charges, and shall be collected in a like manner as taxes.

### **Dishonored Payments**

In the case of a dishonored payment, an NSF fee will be processed on the account in accordance with the Municipality's current Fees & Charges By-Law.

If during any calendar year the Municipality receives two (2) or more dishonored payments, the customer will be notified in writing that the Municipality will only accept payment on the subject amount in the form of cash, certified cheque, money order or debit.

### **Ownership Changes**

Where the Municipality or its agent has been notified in writing of a request for a final bill/meter reading in relation to a property sale, a final meter reading shall be done.

Such requests shall be made to the Municipality or its agent a minimum of five (5) business days prior to the requested meter read date and the Municipality will make a reasonable effort to ensure the final meter reading is done on the day requested.

### **Account Final Billing**

A collection letter will be sent to the previous Account Holder approximately five (5) days after the due date of the final bill. A final billed Account Holder with arrears may be reported to an accredited Collection Agency. The Municipality may add the arrears to the property tax roll after reasonable collection efforts have been made.

A final Account Holder who has a credit will be refunded. Any unclaimed credit will be held by the Municipality for twelve (12) months and then claimed as revenue. A written request may be required before the Municipality will issue a replacement cheque.

### **Small Balance Write off**

When an account has been finalized, if the outstanding balance is less than \$20.00, this amount may be written off, and no action will be taken to recover this amount.

### **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 service, unless it is an emergency. The customer or their authorized designate must be in attendance for the service call.

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

Fees to turn the water service on or off will be charged in accordance with the Municipality's current Fees & Charges By-law.

### **Seasonal Service**

Accounts, where there is a request for service to be temporarily disconnected a fee will be charged for the disconnection and reconnection as established by the Fees & Charges By-law.

The customer is required to pay the fixed monthly charge during the period the service is temporarily disconnected.

## **REVENUE SECURITY**

### **Priority Lien Status**

The Municipality is able to exercise its right to ensure revenue security for water and wastewater. The Municipal Act, 2001, authorizes the Municipality to place unpaid fees and charges for public utilities on the tax roll for the property to which the public utility was supplied, regardless of who is the consumer. Section 398(2) provides that a municipality may add unpaid utility fees, which include water and/or wastewater arrears, to the respective property's tax roll. Ontario Regulation No. 581/06 additionally identifies such fees or charges associated with the supply of water and sewage services as having "priority lien status" as described in section 1 of the Act.

### **Account Balance Transfer**

Prior to transferring outstanding amounts to the property tax roll, reasonable efforts shall be undertaken by the municipality to provide the following notifications:

- Notices/Statements for overdue accounts more than ninety (90) day and greater than \$100 will be mailed out at the end of the month of each water bill due date.
- Outstanding amounts will be transferred to the tax roll fifteen (15) days after the Notices/Statements are mailed out.

### **Disconnection of Services**

The Municipality will only disconnect services for non-payment if the subject property has been placed in Tax Registration and/or Tax Sale as per the Municipal Act, 2001 and O. Reg. 181/03 as amended by 571/17.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Council has the authority and responsibility to:

- Approve the Water & Sewer Rates By-Law and the Fees & Charges By-Law.
- Approve the Water and Sewer Relief for Eligible Low-Income Persons Policy
- Approve the Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy.

The CAO has the authority and responsibility to:

- Ensure compliance with the Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy.

The Treasurer has the authority and responsibility to:

- Administer all accounts receivable, billing and collections of the Municipality, and ensure applicable policy and fees are applied.
- Provide relief as outlined in the Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy and the Water and Sewer Relief for Eligible Low-Income Persons Policy.

The Director of Public Services has the authority and responsibility to:

- Authorize the investigation of water and wastewater billing errors or leaks and responsive actions in accordance with infrastructure maintenance policies.
- Authorize the disconnection and reconnection of services through the Working Supervisor of each applicable Ward.

Staff have the authority and responsibility to:

- Abide by the Water and Wastewater Billing and Collection Policy.