

Stormwater Charges – Halifax Regional Water Commission

What is the Stormwater charge on my water bill?

Halifax Regional Water Commission “HRWC” was given responsibility in 1996 for operation of the water utility services on consolidation of the various municipalities into Halifax Regional Municipality (“HRM”). In 2007 the *Halifax Regional Water Commission Act* was amended by the Province, at the request of HRM, to transfer responsibility for wastewater and stormwater services to HRWC. Previously, wastewater and stormwater services were the responsibility of HRM and fees to cover the cost of providing those services were collected through ordinary municipal taxes.

With the transfer of responsibility for wastewater and stormwater it became necessary for HRWC to establish a fee to maintain existing systems and build new ones where needed. In 2013 and after the necessary cost studies were complete, HRWC applied for and the Board approved the collection of a stormwater charge based on a flat fee for each residential property that had impervious areas (a “site related flow” charge). Essentially, if some or all water runoff drains into a HRWC stormwater system then the property owner will receive a bill for stormwater services.

I am not a customer of Halifax Water, why do I have this bill?

Ditches and stormwater drainage systems exist throughout all areas of HRM. HRWC is responsible for maintaining all of those systems, not just those in areas with city water. If water runoff from your property is entering an HRWC stormwater system then you will receive a bill for that service. Properties within HRWC’s service area that do not receive stormwater service from HRWC are exempt from the stormwater charge. *Note: HRWC currently has an application before the Board to bill properties that are accessed by a driveway which crosses over a HRWC culvert. A Decision is pending.*

How was my stormwater bill determined?

Stormwater charges are a “Site Related Flow Rate” based on the amount of “Impervious Area” on the property. That is, the total area where water could be expected to run off from and enter HRWC stormwater systems. *Note: HRWC currently has an application before the Board which proposes to exempt properties with an impervious area of less than 50 m². A Decision is pending.*

For residential customers an average impervious area per property is used. That average was calculated by HRWC using satellite imagery and mapping technology. That average per property was then divided into HRWC’s total expected site related flow stormwater cost for residential properties to calculate a flat fee per residential property of approximately \$34 per year. *Note: HRWC currently has an application before the Board to charge residential properties based on a previously approved tiered rate structure. The rate structure is based on the impervious area of the property. A Decision is pending.*

For commercial (non-residential) customers the charge is based on the actual number of square meters of impervious area (\$/m²) on the property.

Do all properties get a stormwater bill?

No, only those properties where water runoff enters a HRWC stormwater system will receive a bill. Properties within HRWC's service area that do not receive stormwater service from HRWC are exempt from the stormwater charge.

What if I do not agree with the site related flow stormwater charge?

Anyone can object to an assessment related to the property or "Site Related Flow" portion of the charge. You must first file a notice with HRWC setting out the reasons for the objection and the relevant facts upon which your assessment relies (e.g., water runoff from your property is not going into an HRWC system). HRWC will accept such Notice of Objection by email, letter, facsimile, telephone or in person.

On receipt of a Notice of Objection HRWC will review the property details and withdraw, revise or confirm, in writing, its original decision. The onus is on the Commission to show, based on engineering or other evidence, that the property in question receives stormwater service (i.e., whether the water runoff from the property enters a HRWC stormwater system).

Can HRWC's review decision be appealed?

If a disagreement still exists after HRWC has provided its evidence that the property in question is receiving stormwater service, effective January 1, 2017 you can appeal to the Dispute Resolution Officer (the "DRO"). Contact information for the DRO is as follows:

By email: HalifaxWaterDRO@eastlink.ca
Phone: 902-225-0795
Regular mail: P.O.Box 51030
Halifax, NS
B3M 4R8

Can the DRO's decision be appealed to the Board?

If you disagree with the Dispute Resolution Officer's decision you can appeal to the Board at the address in the Contact Information section below. Appeals must be filed within 30 days of the DRO's decision. All appeals of decisions of the DRO must be in writing and directed to the office of the Clerk of the Board. The Complainant must identify in sufficient detail the matter which is the subject of the complaint. The processes under which complaints are heard are set out in ss. 83 - 89 of the [Public Utilities Act](#).

What was the HRM Right of Way "ROW" charge?

In past, HRWC bills included a separate line called "HRM ROW". This stands for "Halifax Regional Municipality Right of Way". The ROW was a separate charge being collected on behalf of HRM to cover the cost of water runoff from roadways. It was solely a decision of HRM to collect the charge with water bills and was not subject to Board jurisdiction or review. That charge was absorbed into taxes by HRM after March 31, 2016. At the HRM Council meeting of February 21, 2017 the following Motion was passed:

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct staff to draft a by-law setting a stormwater charge

based on the Halifax Water service area and that staff return to Council for consideration of it and request Halifax Water to collect the stormwater right of way charge on the water bill.

If the by-law is passed by Council, the HRM ROW may reappear on HRWC water bills. Please note that the HRM ROW charge is a funding decision of Halifax Regional Municipal Council and is not appealable to the Board.

Contact Information

Email: board@novascotia.ca
Website: <https://nsuarb.novascotia.ca>
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