

Stormwater Charges

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 generated” 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.

Are the “Site Generated” Stormwater and the Right of Way Charge the Same Thing?

No. The “site generated” stormwater charge relates to water runoff coming from properties. The Right of Way (“ROW”) charge relates to runoff from streets and roads. More information on the Right of Way charge is included below.

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

Ditches and stormwater drainage systems exist throughout HRM, not just in areas where “city water” services are provided. HRWC is responsible for maintaining all of the municipal stormwater 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.

How was my stormwater bill determined?

Stormwater charges are a “Site Generated 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.

For non-residential customers the charge is based on the actual number of square meters of impervious area ($\$/m^2$) on the property.

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 generated stormwater cost for

residential properties to calculate a flat fee per residential property of approximately \$33 per year.

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 is this new Right of Way "ROW" charge on the Water Bill?

Recent HRWC bills have included a line called "HRM ROW". This stands for "Halifax Regional Municipality Rights of Way". The ROW amount is not a HRWC rate but rather an amount being collected on behalf of HRM. In a rate case the Board assigned the cost of providing stormwater services relating to water runoff from streets and roads to HRM. This is referred to as "Street Generated Flow".

Approximately 30% of the cost of providing stormwater services relates to water runoff from streets and roads. In past those charges were paid for by HRM from general property taxes. More recently, HRM determined that the costs should be collected by HRWC on its behalf as opposed to being paid from property or other taxes. That was solely the decision of HRM and is not subject to Board jurisdiction or review.

Will I get both a stormwater and ROW charge on my bill?

Yes. Where there is a site generated stormwater charged, the HRM ROW will also be charged.

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

Anyone can object to an assessment related to the property or "Site-Generated 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 you can appeal that decision to the Board. Please note that the HRM ROW charge is a funding decision of Halifax Regional Municipal Council and is not appealable to the Board. HRWC is collecting the HRM ROW charge on behalf of HRM at the request of Council.

How do I file my complaint or appeal with the Board?

All complaints 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](#).

Contact Information

Email: board@novascotia.ca

Fax: (902) 424-3919

Nova Scotia Utility & Review Board

1601 Lower Water Street

Halifax NS B3J 3S3.