

History of Stormwater Billing in HRM

1996:

HRM was created through amalgamation and was responsible for providing wastewater and stormwater service throughout the municipality. HRM began charging for sewer services (a combination of wastewater and stormwater services) through By-Law S100.

1997:

Halifax Water began collecting a sewer (wastewater and stormwater) charge on behalf of HRM from customers who received water service from Halifax Water.

At that time, only customers with piped wastewater service received a sewer services bill. Residents receiving stormwater service from ditches and/or culverts did not pay (wastewater/stormwater services were not included in property taxes). However, they were still provided with the service by the municipality through funds collected from customers with piped wastewater service.

In other words, customers with piped service were subsidizing customers served by ditches and culverts.

2006:

The Province transferred ownership and maintenance responsibilities of rural/suburban streets to HRM, creating the stormwater service boundary. HRM Council directed HRM staff to find a way to effectively fund stormwater service to be able to adequately maintain and upgrade the stormwater system as needed.

2007:

Halifax Water assumed responsibility for all wastewater and stormwater systems and service delivery within the stormwater service boundary and reviewed the existing charges based on user pay principles, as regulated by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB). The NSUARB directed Halifax Water to establish a cost-of-service-based system for stormwater rates to make stormwater billing fairer. All customers receiving stormwater service paid for that service. The rate was no longer based on water consumption, but on impervious areas.

2013:

Halifax Water introduced the first separate rates for stormwater and wastewater services. A flat rate for residential stormwater services was introduced based on the average residential impervious area. Industrial, commercial, and institutional customers were charged per m² of impervious area. These charges applied to customers with properties draining into the Halifax Water stormwater system.

The HRM Right-of-Way (ROW) charge began this year, too. The NSUARB required Halifax Water to charge HRM for their impervious surfaces that drained into the Halifax Water stormwater system. The ROW charge is that cost to HRM spread across the customer base. The ROW charge was included on Halifax Water bills until 2016.

2016:

HRM collected the ROW charge directly through the property tax bill. Collecting the ROW charge on the property tax bill created difficulty for some types of properties such as condos, land leased communities, and water lots.

2017 - Present:

In 2017, Halifax Regional Council asked Halifax Water to collect the ROW charge on Halifax Water bills again.

Halifax Water replaced the flat residential stormwater rate with tiered rates based on each property's impervious area to make stormwater rates more fair and transparent.

Customers who receive stormwater service only by the use of a driveway culvert that is part of the Halifax Water stormwater system also pay for stormwater services.

These changes meant customers who had a larger impact on the stormwater system paid more, and those with less of an impact paid less.

These two changes meant that two stormwater charges now appeared on Halifax Water bills, the Site-Related Flow charge and the ROW charge.

This is how stormwater charges appear on current Halifax Water bills.

Stormwater credits were also introduced for non-residential customers at this time.

Learn more about Halifax Water stormwater services at:
halifaxwater.ca/stormwater-services

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