

Water Leak Forgiveness Policy

Policy Statement

This policy is designed to provide a structured and transparent framework for addressing adjustments to water bills resulting from severe or unexpected water usage caused by leaks. The Policy aims to ensure customers have access to a fair, efficient, and timely resolution process, while safeguarding the integrity of the billing system. By establishing clear guidelines, the Town of St. Marys seeks to enhance customer trust and maintain billing accountability.

Under this Policy, customers can request adjustments to water and wastewater consumption charges after the accidental leak has been repaired by completing the *“Water leak Forgiveness Form”*.

Purpose

Though the customer is responsible for repairing leaks on service plumbing, it is recognized that a high water and wastewater bill resulting from an unintentional water leak can present financial hardship. This Policy provides limited financial relief to eligible customers to address abnormally high water and wastewater bills associated with accidental plumbing failures. By offering a structured framework for adjustments to water bills, the policy aims to mitigate the financial burden caused by such incidents while upholding the accuracy and transparency of billing practices to maintain trust in the systems serving the community.

Scope

This policy applies to residential account holders and not-for-profit properties connected to the Town of St. Marys water and / or wastewater system(s) serviced with a 1 inch or less water supply line.

Definitions

Account refers to a unique account created by the Water Billing Company / Contractor that stores and records current and historical water and wastewater billing and contact information for each premise in the Town.

Not for profit property use refers to properties utilized by organizations or entities whose primary purpose is not to generate profit but to serve public, charitable, educational, or community-focused objectives. These organizations may include charities, religious institutions, or community centers, and are incorporated under the Ontario Corporations Act as an organization that carry on activities without the purpose of gain for its members and any profits to the corporation.

Rental property refers to a property that is owned by an individual, group, or entity and is rented or leased to tenants for a specified period. The primary purpose of a rental property is to generate income for the owner through rent payments made by tenants.

Vacant or Unattended property refers to a residence, building, or unit that remains unoccupied and without any person present for a continuous period exceeding 72 hours. This definition specifically

excludes properties where someone checks in on the premises routinely or at regular intervals for maintenance, security, or other purposes; it applies only to those properties left entirely unattended during the stated timeframe.

Water account holder refers to an individual, group, or entity that is legally responsible for an active water service connection within the Town of St. Marys. This includes managing the account associated with the property's water and/or wastewater services, ensuring timely payment of invoices, and addressing any discrepancies or disputes related to the billing process. Account holders can be tenants of a rental property as defined herein.

Water leak refers to the unintended escape or seepage of water from pipes, fixtures, or other components of the water service infrastructure on the private side of the water meter. Leaks can occur due to damage, corrosion, improper installation, or wear and tear over time. They can lead to increased water usage, higher billing costs, and potential property damage if not promptly identified and repaired. Leaks do not include higher water usage resulting from pools, hot tubs, irrigation systems, exterior water use, or water use caused by negligence.

Water meter is a device used to measure the volume of water consumed by a household, business, or industrial facility. It is typically installed on service lines connecting the municipal supply to the property and ensures accurate tracking of water usage for billing purposes. The Town retains ownership of the water meter. This means that the town is responsible for the installation, maintenance, and replacement of the meter as needed to ensure accurate recording of water usage. Customers are responsible for protecting the meter from damage and ensuring its accessibility for readings, inspections, or servicing by town personnel.

Water service refers to the infrastructure and provisions that deliver potable water from the municipal supply to a customer's property. This typically includes service lines, meters, and any associated equipment necessary to ensure the safe and reliable delivery of water for residential, commercial, or industrial use.

Wastewater service refers to the infrastructure and provisions that facilitate the transfer of wastewater from a customer's property to the municipal wastewater treatment system. This includes service lines and any associated equipment necessary to ensure the safe and effective transport and management of wastewater for residential, commercial, or industrial use.

General Information

An adjustment in accordance with this Policy may occur only after all leaks have been repaired and verified with an actual water meter read either by the Town or water billing contractor.

Reasonable efforts (including hiring a plumber) to locate the leak and initiate repairs must be taken by or on behalf of the customer within 7-days after receiving the water bill indicating the leak or through initial notification of increased water usage provided to the customer by the billing contractor. Where possible, and on the best effort basis, the Town's billing contractor will attempt notifications through a courtesy call, email or physical mail based on available account details to the customer to advise and discuss higher than normal water consumption.

The Customer must complete in full the “*Water Leak Forgiveness Form*” and provide documentation of repairs made prior to being approved for an adjustment within 120 calendar days after the date of final repairs.

There is no extension of the due date or the time for paying water and wastewater bills because of a pending adjustment request. Customers are advised to pay the entire amount due within the normal payment period or enter into a payment arrangement with the billing contractor for the excessive amount in order to remain in good standing on all current bills.

Reimbursements will only occur when a leak forgiveness request is granted. Reimbursements will be issued as a credit to the account in question.

Program Eligibility

Under this program, the Town of St. Marys has identified eligibility criteria as a means to ensure consistent administration of the program, while minimizing unwarranted requests. By providing clear guidelines, the criteria maintain conformity to the program’s objectives and offer a structured context for its equitable implementation.

Qualifying Criteria for the Town of St. Marys Leak Forgiveness Program are as follows:

- **Recent Leak Occurrence:** The plumbing failure or leak must have occurred and been repaired within the last 90 days.
- **Reduced Water Usage:** Applicants must demonstrate that their water usage has decreased following the repairs, indicating the resolution of the leak.
- **Eligible Property:** The property must be a residential dwelling or Not-for-Profit property equipped with a water service line of one inch or less.
- **Account Holder:** Applicants must be the account holder responsible for water and wastewater bills associated with the property.
- **Program Use History:** The applicant must not have utilized the Water Leak Forgiveness Program for the same property address within the past five years.
- **Minimum Bill Amount:** The excess water and wastewater charges resulting from the leak must have resulted in a minimum bill of \$250 to qualify.
- **The Maximum forgiveness eligibility shall be 50% of the excess amount of water / wastewater over the average bill for the account holder, up to a maximum dollar value of \$1,000.00**
- **Application Form and Documentation:** A completed application form must be submitted along with all required supporting documentation, including proof of repairs and water usage records.

Adhering to these criteria ensures that the program remains effective, fair, and accessible to households facing unexpected plumbing failures and associated financial challenges.

Program Ineligibility

These ineligibility conditions are in place to ensure that the program remains focused on genuine and unforeseen plumbing failures rather than preventable issues or circumstances that fall outside of

residential responsibility. Disqualifying Criteria for the Town of St. Marys Leak Forgiveness Program are as follows:

- Vacant or Unattended Properties: Leaks occurring while the property was vacant or unattended for more than 72 hours.
- Previous Qualifying Leak: Account holders with a previous qualifying leak within the past five years for the same address.
- Costs Covered by a Third Party: Leak costs that are covered by a third party, such as insurance or another reimbursement program.
- Unexplained Damage or Neglect: Leaks caused by deliberate damage or neglect, including failure to maintain plumbing systems properly.
- Outdoor Water Usage: Leaks or high usage stemming from outdoor water usage, such as pools, hot tubs, hoses, irrigation systems, or neglect of private plumbing (e.g., failure to winterize outdoor taps).

By enforcing these criteria, the program ensures accountability and fairness while prioritizing genuine cases of plumbing failures that pose financial burdens to households.

Credit Determination

Should the leak qualify, the allowable reimbursement credit would be 50% of the excess amount of water / wastewater bill over the average bill for the account holder, based on the 12-month average water usage, up to a maximum reimbursement of \$1,000.00. If the application is approved, a credit will be issued to the account holder's water and wastewater account by the Town's bill provider which would be reflected on the next available billing cycle.

Payment Options for Non-Qualifying Water Usage

If a leak does not qualify for the Water Leak Forgiveness Program, customers may still be eligible for a deferred payment plan. This plan allows for a payment deferral of one month for every \$100 increment of the outstanding balance, providing additional flexibility for managing water and wastewater bills.

Appeals

Within 30-days of being given notice of decision on any water leak adjustment, customers whom are not satisfied with the decision may submit a request for appeal to the Town. Appeals must be submitted in writing indicating the reason(s) why there is a disagreement with the adjusted amount.

Appeals should be sent to:

Town of St. Marys – Director of Public Works
Attention: Water Leak Appeal
Email: publicworks@town.stmarys.on.ca

Appeals will be reviewed by the Director of Public Works and the Director of Corporate Services (or their delegates) to ensure any adjusted amount(s) were applied as prescribed in this Policy.



A written response advising of the Town’s decision will be sent to the account holder. This decision shall be considered final and no subsequent appeals will be considered.

Communication

The Town of St. Marys will develop and maintain a proactive communications plan that will include a public education component. Communications will include personal approaches and be integrated across multiple online and offline channels.

References

1. Town of St. Marys Water Supply By-Law, 46 of 2014

Approval

This Policy was endorsed on October 14, 2025.

End of Document

| Rev # | Date | Reason | Initiated | Reviewed | Approved |
|-------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------|
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