



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RE: Water rates remain low, despite proposed increases

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – A recently concluded study conducted for the Town of Amherst will result in the town applying to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for changes to its water rates.

In presenting the study to a special Amherst town council meeting on Friday, Nov. 5, 2021, consultant G.A. Isenor Consulting Ltd, in association with Blaine S. Rooney, Consulting Ltd., indicated the proposed increases will allow the town to finance the debt incurred in recent capital projects while allowing the town to continue making strategic capital investments in its water utility infrastructure.

Even with the proposed rate increase, the water bills issued by the Amherst Water Utility, one of more than 50 utilities in the province, will be the sixth lowest in Nova Scotia.

The consultants are recommending rate increases between 7.9 per cent and 13.4 per cent in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, between 3.2 per cent and 3.7 per cent in the 2023-2024 fiscal year and 3.4 per cent and 3.8 per cent in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The size of the increase depends on the size of the water line feeding a building or if it is an unmetered property.

As an example, in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the quarterly water bill for an average Amherst home, which has a 5/8th inch water line and uses an average of 42 cubic metres of water per quarter, will rise to \$71.73 from \$63.12.

However, even with that increase, the quarterly water bill for an Amherst homeowner is still the sixth lowest in the province. Those with lower quarterly bills include New Minas at \$52.32, Digby at \$62.01, Kentville at \$63.11, Wolfville at \$69.43 and Trenton at \$70.75.





All of the other water utilities in the province have higher quarterly bills, with the Victoria County Water Utility quarterly water bill being the highest at \$268.92.

When matched against towns that are normally compared to this community, the Town of Amherst ranks at the bottom. Truro's quarterly bill is \$104.61, Yarmouth's is \$112.87, New Glasgow's is \$120.55, Bridgewater's is \$124.96, Pictou's is \$144.32 and Stewiacke's is \$187.97. Many of these communities will soon face reviews of their own water rates.

The median water quarterly bill in the province is \$127.55.

All of the above rates are current as of Feb. 18, 2021, the last date on which the figures are available.

"No one likes to raise rates, but town council believes it is necessary in order to maintain the delivery of good quality water to the citizens and businesses in Amherst," Mayor David Kogon said.

"We are cognizant of the impact rising costs have on people. Our application to the board, which sets water rates for all water utilities in the province, will result in Amherst's water utility continuing to have some of the lowest water rates in the province."

Conducting the study was the first step in asking the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to set new water rates for the town. The application, along with the study, will now be sent to the board.

The next step will see the board hold a hearing on the application. During this part of the process people wishing to comment on the proposed rate increases will have the opportunity to do so.

The last time the town asked the board to set the water rates was in 2017. These were set to expire on April 1, 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the application being delayed and led to the town using the 2019 rates, as approved by the review board, during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years.

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