

Commercial properties could see new Stormwater rates based on run-off levels

A new commercial billing structure for stormwater rates is set to be considered for Aurora.

Council next week will review a recommendation from municipal staff that could start the development of a new stormwater billing structure based on the amount of rain run-off experienced by the property in question.

The Development Intensity Stormwater Charge framework is intended to be 'more equitable for all ratepayers' and follows a motion put forward by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese to dig deeper into the situation as tenants at St. Andrew's Village are billed individually for stormwater rather than a flat rate for the entire plaza.

'The Town's current stormwater rate framework is built upon a tiered flat fee methodology,' said staff in their report to Council, which was first presented at this month's Committee of the Whole meeting. 'There are a few inequities and drawbacks associated with this model. Firstly, smaller commercial properties like St. Andrew's Shopping Centre are charged by the same amount as large industrial or bulk commercial properties. Secondly, properties that don't have a water meter are not charged a stormwater fee. This means the Town's metered property owners are also paying for the stormwater system cost obligations of all non-metered property owners. Finally, a stormwater charge is not demand-based, meaning it does not measure or charge based upon how much stormwater runoff each metered customer property produces and therefore does not motivate property owners to reduce stormwater runoff volumes.'

'A development intensity stormwater rate model addresses these drawbacks. The model charges properties for their proportionate share of the total stormwater runoff that may be produced within the Town during a storm event. Under this model, properties are categorized by their level of imperviousness and applied a different user rate for each category. Each property's stormwater charge is then calculated by multiplying their specific property's assigned category rate by their property's land area. The rationale being each property is charged for the stormwater runoff that they produce; the greater a property's run-off, the larger their usage requirement for the Town's stormwater system will be.'

'The proposed alternative stormwater model will address the other identified inequities in the present stormwater rate model such as those experienced by the tenants of St. Andrew's Shopping Centre and unmetered properties not sharing the cost burden of the Town's stormwater network.'

Should Council opt to go in this direction, the new stormwater structure will be ready for implementation by the Spring of 2028.

In the meantime, the St. Andrew's Village tenants will see a change in their structure as early as July 1 until the new measures are put in place.

'I think it's been a missing piece of the puzzle and I don't think it's been fair to the ratepayers so I am very glad to see it,' said Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner at the Committee level, thanking Councillor Weese for bringing the original motion forward.

Staff, however, cautioned that if Council goes ahead with the new Town-wide structure, there will be a lot of work to do before the implementation goal of Spring 2028.

'It's something we will be working on and reporting back on a recommended structure in 2027,' said Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright van Kessel. 'But once that structure is in place, it will take some time to actually implement because we'd be looking at some configuration changes that, in our financial system, moving the data over from water billing to tax billing potentially, and then also having to do the work of [categorizing] properties so they are classified and charged appropriately will take some time.'

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