

City continues investments in safe drinking water while delivering on affordability

Feb. 23, 2021 — Despite a tough budget year brought on by the impacts of COVID-19, the City is continuing to invest in safe, affordable drinking water for its residents while balancing the impact on household budgets.

On Monday night, following a public meeting on proposed 2021 water / wastewater rates, Council approved the 2021 Water and Wastewater Budget, including \$6.9 million in contributions to capital infrastructure replacements and investments. While some capital spending prescribed under the City's 10-year water and wastewater financial plan will be pushed back to offset the financial impacts of COVID-19, the City will continue to meet the standards of service residents rely on.

“Clean, affordable drinking water is something every resident relies on,” said Mayor Walter Sendzik. “Thank you to our team for developing a budget that allows us to maintain and enhance our water and wastewater infrastructure, while at the same time ensuring rates remain affordable.”

In total \$4.5 million will be contributed to watermain replacement, aiding in the prevention of water loss due to aging infrastructure, and about \$2.4 million will be directed to sanitary sewer replacement and pollution control projects. These investments will continue to ensure residents can rely on safe drinking water delivered by the City in an environmentally sustainable way.

Infrastructure investments, alongside increasing Regional water costs, will see the average homeowner paying an additional \$16.14 for water / wastewater in 2021. This increase is smaller than in recent years as the City continues efforts to offset costs for homeowners dealing with the financial impacts of the pandemic. Even with a slight increase St. Catharines water / wastewater rates are the third lowest in Niagara.

“We recognize for everyone this is a challenging year, and while we are keeping rate increases low, we are continuing to make investments into the water-wastewater system, ensuring our residents can continue to turn on the tap and trust the water delivered is not only affordable but up to the highest standards of quality and cleanliness,” said City Treasurer Kristine Douglas.

The Water and Wastewater Budget includes money paid to the Niagara Region for operation of its portion of the water / wastewater system, totalling roughly \$35.3 million. This amount charged by the Region, which increased by 3.7 per cent this year, represents 63 per cent of the overall Water and Wastewater Budget expenditures.

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