

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

## Tenant Billing Policy Change

### **What has changed?**

Effective January 1, 2024, the City of Niagara Falls will make several changes to the Water & Wastewater Policies as a result of report F-2023-11 approved by Council on March 21, 2023. These FAQs are specifically for the changes to policy 700.23 Water/Sewer Collection Policy, and the repeal of policy 700.28 Water/Sewer Tenant Account Policy.

Effective January 1, 2024, the City of Niagara Falls will no longer establish accounts in a tenant's name. Starting new tenant accounts and billing of new tenant accounts will no longer occur. New water accounts must be opened and billed in the name of the registered owner(s) of the property and not the name of any tenant(s).

### **What about existing tenant-held accounts?**

There will be no change to existing tenant accounts. Any existing accounts currently billed with the tenant's name will remain until that tenant moves out. At that time, the water account will revert to the owner. The water/wastewater bill will be mailed to the owner's address as listed on the property tax assessment roll.

### **What if my tenant moves out after January 1, 2024?**

The City will obtain a final read on the date that the tenant provides notification of the move. The water account will be finalized, a bill will be mailed to the tenant. At that time, the water account will be placed in the registered owner(s) name, and the owner will be billed for water/ wastewater on a go-forward basis.

### **What happens if the the water bill is not paid the due date?**

If payment is not made to the water & wastewater bill, the arrears are applied to the property tax roll, which are the responsibility of the property owner.

Provincial legislation under section 398 (2) of the Municipal Act provides that charges for the supply of a public utility may be added to the taxes for the property to which the utility was supplied.

### **How does the property owner update the mailing address on the property tax roll?**

To update the mailing address information on your property tax roll, you must submit a formal request through one of the following options:

- Complete the request online: <https://service.niagarafalls.ca/s/article/Request-a-mailing-address-change>
- Mail the request in writing to: P. O. Box 1023 4310 Queen St., Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6X5.
- Fill out a mailing address change request form at City Hall or the Macbain Community Centre

### **Can the tenant still pay the water bill?**

The City of Niagara Falls will continue to accept payments from tenants/other non-owners (such as a property manager). However, it remains the property owner's responsibility to ensure bills are paid on time. The tenant will need the owner's water account number to make a payment.

### **Can my tenant sign up for the dashboard?**

Dashboard accounts should only be set up in the property owner(s) name as the dashboard account holder will have access to all property information including property tax.

### **Why the change to discontinue tenant-held accounts?**

- To reduce unpaid bills - nearly one in three tenant account billings are not paid and are transferred to a third-party collection agency.
- To decrease water loss relating to plumbing issues.
- To have a consistent practice where all accounts will have a water bill in the name of the property owner(s).

### **What are the benefits for the landlord from this change?**

- The landlord has opportunity to save interest charges and administrative costs (\$30 for each tax roll transfer) related to tenant arrears being transferred to the tax roll, which occurs 60 days after the bill is due.
- Potential water leaks are more readily identified by the owner receiving the bill.

### **Doesn't the City have to allow water bills in the name of tenants?**

There is no Provincial legislative regulation as to who may be the account holder for water and wastewater services.

### **Is The City of Niagara Falls the only municipality not to allow tenants from being the water account holders?**

No, the City of Niagara Falls was the only municipality in the Niagara Region where tenants were solely responsible for water billing.

### **As a landlord, how can I avoid adding water arrears to my tax roll?**

- Ensure payments are made on time. As the account holder, all bills and notices will be sent to you.
- Register for a MyCity Dashboard account at niagarafalls.ca. As the account holder you will have the opportunity to view water/property tax account information online. If the account is overdue by more than 60 days, the outstanding balance will be transferred to the property tax roll for the service address.
- The property owner will receive a letter advising that arrears have been added to the property tax roll due to water and wastewater arrears.
- Payment of the arrears must be made to the property tax roll.

### **What is the schedule for notification of past-due accounts?**

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|-------------------------|---|
| Ten days after due date | A reminder notice sent to the property owner.   |
| 60 days past due        | Notice to primary account holder confirming transfer to tax roll plus administrative fee. |