

Residential Tenant Billing Policy Change

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

What has changed?

Hamilton City Council has approved a change to the water and wastewater/storm billing policy. All residential accounts established on or after June 1, 2018, 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 residential tenant held accounts?

Any existing accounts currently billed with tenants will remain until that tenant moves out. At that time, the water account will revert back to the owner. The water bill will then be mailed to the owner's address as listed on the property tax assessment roll.

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, please contact the City of Hamilton's Taxation office in writing either by mail at 71 Main Street West, Hamilton Ontario, PO Box 2040 Stn LCD1, L8N 0A3, or by fax to (905) 546-2449.

Can the tenant still pay the water bill?

Alectra Utilities, as the City's water billing agent, 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. Tenant will need the owner's Alectra water account number which (where applicable) will be different than the tenant's Alectra electric account number.

How is "residential" defined?

Residential accounts are defined as pertaining to a property that is used or designed for use as a domestic establishment (dwelling) in which one or more persons usually sleep and prepare / serve meals and include any lands or buildings that are associated with the dwelling or its yard.

What about a “mixed-use” property that has both residential and non-residential uses (for example both commercial and residential units?)

Assuming each unit has its own water meter, the residential tenant accounts (post June 1, 2018) will be in the name of registered owner(s) of the property. Non-residential accounts may be opened in the name of the tenant.

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Can residential condominiums have its water account in the name of a property manager?

Yes, no change.

Why the change to discontinue residential tenant held accounts?

- To reduce unpaid bills - nearly one in three residential tenant account billings are not paid with arrears transferred to the property tax roll
- To lessen residential tenants paying for water loss related to plumbing issues that are the responsibility of the property owner
- To have a consistent practice where all residential rentals will have water bill in name of property owner(s). Most residential tenants (particularly those in apartments or townhome complexes) currently do not receive a water bill

What are the benefits for the landlord from this change?

- Landlord has opportunity to save interest charges and administrative cost (\$33.60 for each tax roll transfer) related to tenant arrears being transferred to the tax roll which occurs 60 days after the bill was due
- Potential water leaks more readily identified by owner receiving bill

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

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

Is Hamilton the only municipality to not allow residential tenants from being the water account holder?

No many municipalities require the water bill to be in the name of the property owner regardless of customer type (Cambridge and Grimsby are nearby examples).