

**Mr. Richard Ferguson, [REDACTED]
Water Billing Dispute Delegation to Audit, Finance &
Administration Committee**

Added Item 8.1(a)

Summary

Table 1 on page 2, provides the recent water and wastewater/storm billings for [REDACTED] (the property owner is the account holder). The crux of the owner's water billing issue lies with a high water bill experienced in August 2019, while the owner was away on vacation, for a significant amount of water consumption that the owner attributes to a running external hose faucet/bib (more commonly known as an outside water tap). Unfortunately, the water supply to the hose faucet was not shut off despite the owner being away on vacation. The City recommends shutting water to one's property when away to avoid unauthorized water use or undetected leakage occurring at unoccupied properties. Presumably, the owner has checked their property for other sources of water loss and finding none, has concluded the outside water tap had been turned on and left running while the owner was away on vacation.

A situation of suspected unauthorized water use is not addressed by current water bill adjustment policies such as the City's Water Leak Adjustment Policy or Extraordinary Circumstance Policy as water loss due to unauthorized use/theft, vandalism or construction damage is the responsibility of the property owner. Additionally, both policies exclude adjustments where a dwelling is unoccupied and/or vacant for more than 72 hours. For extended absences, customers should consider shutting off the water supply (except where water is used for heating) and draining all the pipes and appliances. The City has long promoted the shut off of water when a property will be unoccupied/vacant for extended periods via Alectra customer service staff, newspapers ads, bill inserts (including the October 2019 Hamilton Water newsletter bill insert) and on the City/Alectra websites.

The City has on occasion received requests for financial assistance related to unauthorized use, albeit these requests are usually associated with newer homes as fences and gates have not customarily been erected when homeowners initially occupy their homes. As the City is not able to corroborate such claims, the aforementioned Council approved bill adjustment policies do not permit staff to provide adjustments related to unauthorized use.

Per the property owner delegation request, considering the significant amount of the August 2019 water bill, the owner has requested "some support from the city."

The City through Alectra does offer water utility customers payment arrangements in accordance with the City's Water and Wastewater/Storm Billing Payment Arrangement Policy. As such, Alectra contacted the customer on September 24, 2019 offering an optional interest-free payment arrangement for up to one year. The owner has entered into a six-month interest-free payment arrangement indicating the six-month term was sufficient.

TABLE 1

Read Date	Total Bill	Consumption (m3)	Read From	Read To	Avg Daily (m3)	Billing Days
10/24/18	\$ 52.00	12	523	535	2.40	5
11/20/18	\$ 44.99	29	535	564	1.07	27
12/21/18	\$ 29.96	18	564	582	0.58	31
1/24/19	\$ 27.40	16	582	598	0.47	34
2/20/19	\$ 20.62	12	598	610	0.44	27
3/25/19	\$ 54.28	14	610	624	0.42	33
4/23/19	\$ 40.89	11	624	635	0.38	29
5/27/19	\$ 51.05	13	635	648	0.38	34
6/26/19	\$ 51.32	14	648	662	0.47	30
7/29/19	\$ 53.54	14	662	676	0.42	33
8/29/19	\$ 1,101.81	339	676	1015	10.94	31
9/27/19	\$ 40.89	11	1015	1026	0.38	29