




**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
**Revenue Services Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	January 15, 2025
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Proposed amendments to the timelines for the Vacant Unit Tax program (FCS25009) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Clayton Pereira (289) 442-5585
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Clayton Pereira Director, Revenue Services
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That staff be directed to revise the timelines for the Vacant Unit Tax program, with a new start date of February 10, 2025, and an extended submission deadline of April 30, 2025;
- (b) That staff be directed to waive the penalty for late declarations made after April 30, 2025 for the 2024 self-declaration year only.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report recommends revisions to the timelines for the Vacant Unit Tax program in response to delays caused by the Canada Post labour disruption. These changes will not impact the general program other than proposing amendments to the timelines.

Originally, the declaration period for Hamilton residential property owners was planned to open from January 13 to March 31, 2025. A late declaration period, accepting late declarations with a \$250 late fee was planned from April 1 to April 30, 2025. Notice to declare letters containing essential program details were set to be mailed in December 2024.

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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However, the Canada Post labour disruption has impacted the delivery of these letters. To address this issue, staff recommend rescheduling the declaration period to start on February 10, 2025, allowing time for the notice letters to be mailed as soon as possible. Additionally, to encourage compliance, staff propose waiving the \$250 late declaration fee for the 2024 self-declaration year only.

**Alternatives for Consideration** – Not Applicable

**FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:** The proposed amendments may result in minor adjustments to the program's operational budget, particularly in terms of communications and reprogramming the Vacant Unit Tax portal. These costs are expected to be absorbed within the program's existing budget.

**Staffing:** Workload distribution for existing staff may be adjusted to manage the revised timelines, including customer support services, taxation staff time and IT adjustments to accommodate the revised dates for property owner declarations and tax assessments.

**Legal:** No immediate Legal implications from the revised timelines.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Vacant Unit Tax program was ratified by Council in April 2024 and the declaration period was set to open in January 2025.

Staff had planned to mail notice letters to property owners in December 2024 containing relevant information enabling residents to submit their declarations when the portal opened in January 2025.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

This report recommends amending policy changes related to fees and deadlines to ensure increased compliance for the 2024 Vacant Unit Tax declaration year. These measures are recommended to ensure alignment with the program's goals and to support high levels of customer service.

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Staff have been consulting with several internal staff, including Communications, IT and Taxation, as well as contracted consultants engaged for the Vacant Unit Tax program.

**ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Due to the impact of the Canada Post labour disruption on the Vacant Unit Tax program, it is recommended that the declaration period's start date be moved from January 13, 2025 to February 10, 2025. This adjustment provides additional time for notice letters to be mailed to residential property owners, ensuring they receive the necessary information to complete their occupancy declarations for the 2024 tax year before the April 30, 2025, deadline.

Additionally, staff recommend waiving penalties for late declarations during the program's first year to account for the adjusted timeline.

These recommendations aim to provide a fair and reasonable solution, addressing potential challenges and concerns from property owners affected by the Canada Post labour disruption. The revised timelines would enable the Vacant Unit Tax to be billed alongside the 2025 property tax bills in June 2025.

No additional alternatives are recommended at this time, as they could jeopardize the planned billing timelines for June 2025.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Not Applicable.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Not Applicable.