

## **2024 Water Capacity Buy-Back Program**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The efficient use of Oxford County's municipal groundwater sources is of primary importance to the County. Water Conservation measures such as outside water use restrictions, water use metering initiatives and public education campaigns have been in place in Oxford County municipal systems for several years. The majority of the initiatives have targeted residential users. In 2013, this program was set up for the County's Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) customers as they account for more than 50% of the water consumed. In 2015, large multi-residential buildings were included as they are often not eligible for programs targeted at single family residential customers. In 2024, the opportunity for eligible properties to reapply for the incentive was added to encourage continuous improvement in water efficiency as new technologies are established. This update also included modernization of the offered incentive rates to remain comparable to other similar programs in Ontario.

A water capacity buy-back program targeted to ICI and multi-residential customers has large potential conservation benefits and is one part of an overall Water Efficiency Plan for the County.

### **2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Communities implement water conservation and efficiency programs for a variety of reasons. The following goals and objectives have been identified for the Water Capacity Buy-Back Program:

- Continue to demonstrate Oxford's excellence in Environmental Stewardship through the efficient use of our groundwater resources;
- Promote economic development opportunities by freeing up existing water and wastewater capacity; and
- Maintain reasonable and competitive water and wastewater rates through the deferral or delay of capital infrastructure required for capacity expansion.

### **3.0 PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Water Capacity Buy-Back Program is intended to encourage ICI customers and large multi-residential customers to implement water efficiency technology/processes at their existing facilities and buildings. Financial incentives are offered to help offset initial implementation capital costs.

The program is a win-win solution as the County increases its water supply reserves and the customer sees future cost savings in reduced water/sewer bills.

### **3.1 Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for the program, the property must meet the following criteria:

- a) Be an existing facility/building within Oxford County and be serviced by an Oxford Municipal Water System;
- b) Be classified as an Industrial, Commercial or Institutional customer or be a multi-residential property with at least seven residential units;
- c) For ICI customers, be in compliance with the County's Sewer Use Bylaw and/or a negotiated over-strength agreement; and
- d) Not have previously received funding under the program more than once in the same calendar year.

### **3.2 Water Audit & Program Application**

In order to assess compliance with eligibility requirements, the County requires the completion of a water audit of the facility to determine whether water efficiency opportunities exist. The Audit shall be completed by a qualified professional retained by the customer. County staff will review the Water Audit report, request additional information as necessary and determine whether the eligibility requirements have been satisfied.

Where a facility has been deemed eligible for the program, the applicant shall submit an application outlining the water efficiency measures to be implemented. The report shall include the scope of the work to be undertaken, the associated timelines for implementation and a cost estimate for the project. The report shall be prepared by a qualified professional.

Where projects are limited to a low-flow fixture (toilet/clothes washer) replacement program, the requirement for a qualified professional may be waived, however the report should detail the number and type of replacements as well as the expected costs savings. For multi-residential buildings, County staff will provide data to assist a landlord with completing this application.

### **3.3 Application Review and Approval**

The County will review information provided within the technical report and make a recommendation on the level of funding. The level of funding provided shall be assessed on a case by case basis and take the following into account:

#### **3.3.1 Funding requests less than or equal to \$100,000**

- The availability of funds within the approved system budget;
- The overall cost of the project in comparison with the costs of water and wastewater system capacity expansion;
- Be a maximum of 50% of the total cost of the project;
- Be a maximum \$0.75 per litre of water saved per day; and
- Be no more than \$100,000.

### **3.3.2 Funding requests greater than \$100,000**

- The availability of funds within the approved system budget
- The overall cost of the project in comparison with the costs of water and wastewater system capacity expansion;
- Be a maximum of 50% of the total cost of the project;
- Be a maximum \$0.75 per litre of water saved per day; and
- Receipt of County Council approval of the application, based on a staff report recommending acceptance.

For projects of this scope, approved funding will be included in the following year's operating budget and in addition to the payment terms listed in section 4, payment will not be released until such time as the operating budget is approved by County Council or in special circumstances the use of reserves as approved by Council.

### **3.4 Post-implementation Audit and Payment**

Following the completion of the project, the applicant shall on a daily basis monitor water consumption and six-months following the implementation complete a post-implementation water audit to determine the degree of efficiency achieved. A report shall be prepared for the County by a third-party consultant and demonstrate the water savings. The report shall be used to calculate the amount of the payment based on the conditions in section 3.3.