



Stormwater Utility and Rainwater Incentive Program Implementation Communications Plan

PURPOSE

To educate and inform property owners and industry stakeholders, as the City of Victoria transitions to the Stormwater Utility model in 2016 and introduces the Rainwater Management Incentive Program in 2015.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

- To increase understanding about the stormwater utility, including:
 - What Victoria's stormwater infrastructure does and why it is important;
 - The benefits of a stormwater utility in terms of:
 - A user pay system, linking impact with costs and inclusive of all properties,
 - Environmental stewardship – new rainwater management incentives to encourage sustainable practices,
 - Creation of dedicated reserve fund for large capital projects and emergencies.
 - The changes in how property owners pay for stormwater services
 - How stormwater utility rates will be determined, information to help property owners budget and timelines.
- To increase understanding about the Rainwater Management Incentive Program, including awareness about:
 - Rainwater Management
 - What rainwater management is and why it is needed;
 - What the City and property owners are already doing in terms of rainwater management;
 - Rainwater Management Incentive Program
 - Ongoing credits will be available for all property owners who manage rainwater sustainably and an additional one-time rebate program will be available for single family properties
 - "How to" information about rainwater management and information about applying for the incentive program.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

- Practical and easy to understand.
- Communicate directly to all property owners, as all are affected.
- Focus on environmental and fairness benefits.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This phase will focus on education and information. It will demonstrate how engagement feedback from earlier phases has been incorporated.

IAP2 Spectrum	
Public Participation Goal	Inform: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities or solutions.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.

BACKGROUND

Stormwater Management

Managing the quality and quantity of stormwater that flows through the community is an important service that the City of Victoria provides. This includes maintaining and upgrading the underground stormwater infrastructure, much of which is almost 100 years old. This includes 253 kilometers of storm drains, 73 stormwater outlets, 3 stormwater rehabilitation units and 5,700 catchbasins.

Regulating and monitoring stormwater quality, street cleaning services, spill response and main, connection pipes and catch basin cleaning are some of the other stormwater-related services undertaken by the City. The City also invests in rainwater management methods such as the rain gardens located at City Hall, Fisherman's Wharf Park and along Trent Street. Guidelines for the sustainable management of stormwater are also included in the Official Community Plan. Community partnerships such as the Bowker Creek Initiative and other educational partnerships also support stormwater management in Victoria.

Development of the Stormwater Utility and Proposed Credit Program

Moving to a stormwater utility model means introducing a user-pay system for stormwater charges and allows for incentives for property owners that manage rainwater sustainably. Instead of the current method of paying for stormwater based upon property value and having this included in property taxes, the utility fees will be largely based upon property characteristics that relate to the quality and volume of stormwater runoff flowing into the stormwater system and services allocated. The new utility will also include street cleaning costs. Properties that actively manage rainwater through rain gardens, cisterns, and other approved methods would be able to apply for an annual reduction off their stormwater utility bill.

Engagement Results

In the fall of 2013, the City of Victoria gathered input from stakeholder groups regarding the change to a stormwater utility model and the proposed rainwater management credit program.

In January 2014, responsive to community input, the implementation of the stormwater utility was shifted by one year. This was done to allow property owners more time to plan for the change in how stormwater services are billed and to learn more about rainwater management methods that could be appropriate.

Other feedback included ideas about how to make the credit program more flexible and to simplify the credit application process. Property owners asked for case studies to be developed, so they could better understand the benefits and challenges of managing rainwater. Clear design guidelines for rainwater management methods, education programs and a one-time upfront rebate program, were also requested. A full summary of the feedback is available at www.victoria.ca/stormwater.

Case Studies

Recently, rainwater management case studies were developed. Various rainwater management methods were examined across different property types. The cost and the effectiveness, in terms of how much water each method could treat, are now better understood and this has helped to refine the credit program. The idea of creating a rebate program was also further developed during this process.

Changes to the Credit Program

The original, proposed credit program offered on-going, annual reductions off a property owner's stormwater utility bill. The case studies offered solutions to increase the effectiveness of the rainwater management methods, while also creating a simpler approach for home owners. In many cases one method could be effective at treating 90% of the water on the property. The credit program for most property types now reflects this. All property types can participate in the credit program.

Rebates are now being developed for single family properties. The rebates will offer financial assistance at the time when property owners are investing in rainwater management methods.

Next Steps



The first step will be updating stakeholders on the timelines and program details to raise awareness of what to expect over the next two years. Industry education will be a focus of communications work this fall and winter. Celebrating properties that are already managing rainwater sustainably will be another focus.

In March 2015, property owners will receive a package including information about the Rainwater Management Incentive Program; details about rainwater management methods, what to consider and how to apply. Applications for the incentive program will open at this time. The package will also include information about the transition to the Stormwater Utility model in 2016. Stormwater property assessment information, including the property characteristics being used to determine the stormwater utility rates and the estimate amount that will appear on the first stormwater utility bill in 2016, will also be included to help property owners plan for this change.

Workshops and educational events designed to teach property owners about rainwater management and about the incentive program will be held in the spring and summer of 2015. The dates for these events will also be included in the information package.

For the first time in the spring of 2016, approximately 20% of stormwater costs will be included within the property tax notice. The other 80% will be included in the first stormwater utility bills that will be issued in September, 2016.

As the City develops standards for further incorporating rainwater management into its buildings, roads and rights of way, related projects will also be communicated to show our commitment as well.

STAKEHOLDERS

External

- All property owners (13,553)
 - Tier A: Single family residential property owners (1-4 units) (10,385)
 - Tier B: Multi-family residential property owners (over 4 units) (1,428)
 - Tier C: Civic/Institutional (287)
 - Private
 - Government (some paid Payments In Lieu of Taxes)
 - Federal Properties
 - VIHA
 - SD #61
 - GVHA
 - Provincial Properties
 - Tier D: Industrial and Commercial (1,453)
 - Hotel/motel, retail, parking lot owners, etc
 - Permissive Tax Exempt Properties (165) (across all Tiers)
 - Churches/faith groups (61)
 - Shelters and supportive housing, not for profit organizations (81)
 - Private schools (5)
 - Heritage and Revitalization Tax Exempt (18)
 - Deferred Tax (797) (All Tier A)
 - Properties with no stormwater connection
 - City of Victoria properties and organizations that lease from the City
 - Neighbouring municipalities: Saanich, Oak Bay, Esquimalt
- Interested/ engaged property owners (150 on stakeholder list)
- Stakeholder related associations
 - Neighbourhood Associations (included in stakeholder list)
 - Specific stakeholder related associations (included in stakeholder list)
- Rainwater Management Industry
 - Rainwater Management Related Associations
 - Canadian Association for Rainwater Management (CANARM)
 - Cascadia Green Building Council
 - Canada Green Building Council
 - Plumbers Association
 - British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA)
 - BC Landscape & Nursery Association (BCLNA)
 - BC Waste Water Association (BCWWA)
 - Onsite Wastewater Professionals (CRD: Environmental Partnerships)
 - Association of Professional Engineers (BC Chapter)
 - LEED Professionals
 - Local Building Associations
 - Urban Development Institute
 - BC Construction Association
 - BC Housing
 - Canadian Home Builders Association, Victoria Chapter
 - Vancouver Island Construction Association
 - Victoria Real Estate Board
 - Building Owners & Managers Association of BC
 - Condominium Home Owners Association
 - Executive and Strata Advisory Services
 - Rental Owners and Managers Society of BC
 - Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association
 - Landlord BC

- Suppliers
 - Rainwater management supply companies (via CANARM)
 - Paving Professionals
 - Irrigation companies
 - Local nurseries and garden stores

Influencers/Partners

- University of Victoria
 - Environmental Law Centre
 - POLIS
- Capital Regional District
- Greater Victoria Compost Education Centre
- Bowker Creek Association
- Gorge Waterway Association
- Burnside Gorge Community Association
- BC Transit – green team/ possible partnership
- Media

Internal

- Mayor and Council
- Front line customer service staff responsible for phone calls, billing etc. (PW, PSC and Development Counter)
- Stormwater Working Group
 - Engineering and Public Works
 - Underground utilities
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Sustainable Planning and Community Development
 - Community Planning
 - Development Permits
 - Permits and inspection (plumbing and building)
 - Finance
 - Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
- Other Departments: Parks, Transportation

KEY MESSAGES

Our Stormwater System

- The City of Victoria manages three main underground services: water, sewer and stormwater. The stormwater system helps to manage the rain and runoff in our City with the goal of reducing flooding by moving stormwater away from properties and improving the quality of the stormwater that flows into our creeks and ocean.
- For over 150 years, stormwater infrastructure has been developed and maintained in accordance with the best practices of the times. You can step back in time and learn more about the evolution of stormwater management practices by visiting our online timeline (www.victoria.ca/stormwater).
 - When the City of Victoria was first being developed, installing pipes and drains to keep water away from new residential and commercial areas was the focus.
 - As development increased, water quality became an issue. New technologies were introduced to reduce the amount of oils, metals, grit, grease and chemicals entering our waterways.
 - Our aging stormwater system, much of which is almost 100 years old, needs renewal and we need to act now so our community is prepared for the impacts of our changing climate.
 - Rainwater management is a sustainable way of treating the rain that falls in our community as a resource, and not as a waste product. The City is beginning to incorporate rain gardens, green roofs, permeable paving and other rainwater

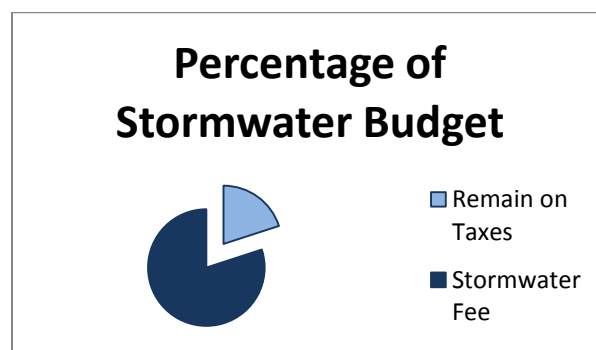
management methods into an approach of balancing traditional infrastructure with green infrastructure.

- Over the past 150 years we have been working to build and maintain our stormwater system which is mostly all underground; out of sight and out of mind.
 - Over 15,000 property connection pipes – that carry away stormwater from houses and businesses
 - 5,700 catch basins – that are located along the curb and collect the stormwater from the road. They also filter some of the oil, metals, sand and dirt to keep our water clean.
 - 253 kilometres of stormwater mains – If in a straight line they would stretch all the way from Victoria to Campbell River.
 - 3 stormwater rehabilitation units – Located at Fisherman's Wharf, Rock Bay and at Public Works. These large tanks capture sand, silt, oils and floating objects, reducing the contaminants that flow into our waterways. They are located at the end of some storm mains.
 - 73 stormwater outlets – where the stormwater flows into our creeks, harbour, and ocean.
- The quality of our stormwater affects us all as we use our beaches and waterways for recreation and enjoyment. It also directly affects the ecosystems in our community that are dependent upon clean water.

Stormwater Utility

- In 2016, the way property owners pay for stormwater services will change.
- Old Tax-based System
 - In the past, all stormwater charges were included in the annual property tax bill and the amount paid for these services was determined by property value.
 - This led to low awareness of the stormwater system and the related environmental impacts and a limited ability to encourage sustainable rainwater management.
- New Utility System
 - The new stormwater utility is a user-pay system.
 - Connects the impact a property is having on the stormwater system, directly to their bill. The property characteristics that relate to the quantity and quality of stormwater flowing into the stormwater system and the stormwater-related services provided for each property, will be used to determine the stormwater fee.
 - All properties will contribute through this system, just like how all properties currently pay for water and sewage services.
 - Paying for stormwater services through a utility bill, encourages sustainable rainwater management methods such as rain gardens, permeable paving and cisterns through an incentive program.
 - Credits: Properties that choose to manage rainwater with an approved method can apply for an annual reduction off their Stormwater Utility Bill.
 - Rebates: One-time, upfront rebates will be offered for single-family homes..
 - The stormwater utility model also allows for a new Stormwater Reserve Fund to be created. This fund will be used for large scale capital projects and emergency work.
- Summary: The benefits of a stormwater utility:
 - User pay, links impacts to cost, inclusive of all properties;
 - Encourages environmental stewardship – new incentives encourage sustainable practices;
 - Creation of dedicated reserve fund for large capital projects and emergencies.

- **Billing Changes**
 - How stormwater utility rates are determined:
 - Amount of non-permeable or hard area:
 - This area has been determined with GIS technology, aerial photography and building plans.
 - For single family properties this is the building footprint and an additional 3% of the building footprint to represent the walkways, driveways, and similar hard surfaces. For all other property types, this includes measurements for buildings and all driveways.
 - Length of street frontage:
 - This area has been determined by the length of frontage and by the classification of street (arterial, local, etc)
 - Street cleaning services remove metal, grit, debris and other harmful materials for our road and sidewalk network, keeping them out of our stormwater system. This upstream, preventative work does a lot to improve stormwater quality. These costs are being removed from property taxes and included within the stormwater utility.
 - Property type:
 - Based on BC Assessment's Actual Use Codes: ie: residential, commercial, industrial etc.
 - Different activities have different impacts on stormwater quality.
 - Whether or not a property is part of the Codes of Practice group:
 - For properties with 10 or more parking spaces or those that are part of the automotive industry, recreational facilities, outdoor storage operations, recycling operations or constructions and development activities.
 - Timelines and Budgeting:
 - In March 2015, all property owners will receive a Stormwater Utility Property Assessment. This will include property details such as:
 - Amount of non-permeable area on a property
 - Length of street frontage and road classification
 - Property type
 - Whether or not a property is part of the Codes of Practice group
 - It will also include the estimated the amount that will remain included in property taxes (~20% in light blue) and the stormwater fee that will be included on first stormwater utility bill in September 2016 (~80% in dark blue).



- To allow property owners to understand this change, the amount that would have been paid under the old model (100% of stormwater fees on property tax bill, based on property value) this number will also be included.

- There will also be information about how to appeal a specific property characteristic, before the first utility bill is issued in September 2016.

Rainwater Management

- Both the traditional approach of stormwater management (the pipes, drains and catch basins) and the newer approach of rainwater management (rain gardens, cisterns, green roofs and other methods) are needed in Victoria.
- Rainwater management looks at how we can work to maintain or restore natural water cycles and use rainwater as the resource that it is. These methods work to slow and clean the rainwater and can also be used to collect rainwater for future use. Managing rainwater can also decrease the flow of stormwater through our system during rain events.
- Rain gardens, permeable paving, green roofs, rain barrels, cisterns and infiltration chambers are some examples of rainwater management methods. They can create natural, beautiful landscapes and public spaces.
- What the City and private property owners are already doing in terms of rainwater management
 - City Properties:
 - Fisherman's Wharf Rain Garden
 - Victoria's largest rain garden, cleaning and slowing runoff.
 - Burnside Gorge Community Centre
 - Green roof, permeable paving, Cecelia Creek which was day-lighted to create more awareness about the quality of water, rain garden in park
 - Spirit Square at City Hall
 - Rain Garden as an educational showpiece in the heart of downtown
 - Trent Street Rain Garden
 - Victoria's first rain garden, located by Bowker Creek, only 1 of 2 streams
 - Private Properties:
 - Dockside Green and The Railyards (multi-family residential)
 - Green roofs, bioswales, permeable paving, rain gardens
 - The Atrium (mixed-use)
 - Rain gardens – treats all runoff from development site
 - Hillside Mall (commercial)
 - Rain gardens, permeable paving and bioswales to slow and clean run off from large parking lot
 - BMW Victoria (commercial)
 - Rain garden at the bottom of a large car sales lot and mechanic shop-cleans and slows runoff before it enters the Inner Harbour
 - Vic West Elementary School (civic)
 - A demonstration rain garden within the main courtyard of the school.
 - Private property on Robertson Street (single-family residential)
 - Rain barrels, cisterns, permeable paving, rain garden

Rainwater Management Incentive Program



Please note: This section will be completed this winter when the rebate program is approved and the rainwater management guidelines are developed.

The Rainwater Management Incentive Program encourages property owners to manage rainwater sustainably through a both a credit and rebate program.

Credits

The rainwater management credits will enable property owners to reduce their annual stormwater utility bill on an on-going basis, if they manage rainwater sustainably with an approved method. A rainwater management credit is an annual reduction off a property's stormwater utility bill. The maximum reductions range from 10% to 50%. All credit applications must be renewed after five years.

The credit program varies between property types. Single family properties can apply for a 10% reduction off their annual utility bill. All other property types can apply for up to a 40% credit, with an additional 10% credit for education programs where applicable

Rebates

The rebate program will offer one-time upfront financial assistance with the cost of installing rainwater management methods for single-family homes. This will assist property owners when they purchase and install these methods. The complete details of the rebate program will be developed and presented to Council this winter.

The City of Victoria has developed a list of rainwater management methods that qualify for the incentive program. Depending on your property type, these methods may qualify:

- Rain Barrels (rebate only)
- Cisterns
- Infiltration Chambers
- Rain Gardens
- Bioswales
- Permeable Paving
- Green Roofs
- Education