



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council
FROM: Joseph Vandermeer, Deputy Treasurer
DATE: October 28, 2024
REPORT NO.: CS-2024-035
SUBJECT: 2025 Rates and Fees

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CS-2024-035 dated October 28, 2024, regarding the 2025 Rates and Fees be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the 2025 Rates and Fees be approved by Council as outlined in Appendix A;

AND FURTHER THAT a By-law to establish the 2025 Rates and Fees be approved and that By-law 2023-0105 be repealed.

KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Rates and fees for all Town programs have been reviewed as part of the 2025 budget process.
- The proposed changes to the 2025 rates and fees reflect inflationary increases related to the cost of delivering the associated service.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

As per the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, c.25 as amended, municipalities are required to submit to Council for approval all rates and fees that will be imposed for the upcoming year. As part of this approval, Council must adopt a by-law annually, listing all fees and rates to be levied by the Town of Halton Hills.

Departments look at many factors when they consider a new fee/rate or increases to an existing fee/rate for the services they provide. Such considerations will include an in-depth analysis of the cost of service delivery including staff time and/or other resourcing such as equipment, utilities, supplies, postage, etc. Staff will also examine the rates and fees of comparable and/or neighbouring municipalities and consider market factors such as the potential demand for a service.

For the 2025 rates and fees review, staff assessed their departmental fees and rates relative to the cost of providing the service. In addition, a review of fees and rates charged by nearby municipalities, and/or municipalities of similar size was undertaken. The proposed 2025 rates and fees are listed in Appendix A.

Each department has provided a rationale for any changes in their respective rates and fees as follows:

Office of the CAO – Clerks

Clerk's fees have been indexed by 3%, with minor rounding adjustments to the nearest whole dollar.

Corporate Services

Corporate Services fees have been indexed by 3% where applicable.

Fire Services

The previous rates for Fire Safety Inspections were not aligned with the Town's hourly rates for other fire inspection services. This discrepancy has now been corrected to ensure consistency. The rate for the first hour of a requested fire safety inspection, as well as each additional hour has been reduced to \$220 (initially proposed at \$226 with the 3% increase) to match the other fire inspection rates.

In addition, all other user fees have been indexed by 3% for inflation.

Transportation and Public Works

Building Services

Building Services has implemented a 3% increase in most user fees to account for inflationary pressures. Permit fee adjustments were informed by a benchmarking review conducted by staff, comparing fees charged by municipalities in Halton Region. Based on this review, it was determined that the Town's permit fees for 2025 would remain below the regional average.

The percentage increase ensures that the Building Services Division can continue to cover both direct and indirect operational costs. Notably, some building types, such as multi-story residential buildings, offices, banks, department stores, and supermarkets, will see increases above 3%.

A reduction in user fees has been applied to the mandatory sewage system maintenance inspection program. This decrease will reduce costs for property owners within the wellhead protection area who are subject to the mandatory five-year re-inspection cycle for private sewage systems. The reduction reflects the cost of administering the program as regulated by the Ontario Building Code.

Several housekeeping updates were made for the 2025 user fees to improve efficiency and consistency for both public users and building staff. For example, the hourly rate for building inspections has been increased by 4.5% to match the rate for plans examination.

Additionally, the “phased permit” fee has been raised from \$319.63 to \$702.91 per construction phase. This fee applies to large-scale projects that require the construction of footings or foundations prior to full permit issuance and reflects the administrative efforts involved in the process.

Development Engineering

The Development Engineering group has prepared an update to the Site Alteration By-law, which will be presented to Council this fall. As part of this update, new fees have been identified to support the revised process. These include:

- **Site Alteration Renewal Fee:** Due to the varying scope and complexity of site alterations, this fee will be calculated as a percentage of the initial permit fee rather than a fixed amount. While the renewal fee is not intended to provide full cost recovery, it will partially compensate for staff time involved in processing requests to renew or extend permits and agreements, which are not covered by the initial application fee.
- **Site Alteration By-law Agreement Fee:** This new fee will partially compensate for staff time required to create an agreement between the applicant and the Town to support the site alteration permit. The necessity for an agreement will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific scope, complexity, and sensitivity of the application. If an agreement is deemed necessary, this fee will be added to the application fee. Like the renewal fee, it is not designed for full cost recovery but provides partial compensation for the creation and execution of an agreement.
- **Site Alteration By-law Appeal Fee:** This fee will support the newly proposed appeals process under the updated by-law, allowing applicants to appeal decisions, conditions, or orders issued by staff. The appeal process will be managed by the Clerks Department through a new appeals committee. It is important to note that this fee is not punitive but reflects the costs associated with staff efforts to prepare and present their case to the committee during an appeal.

All other fees have been indexed by 3% where applicable.

Community Services

The 2025 Community Services rates and fees strategy provides a comprehensive and structured framework for annual pricing adjustments. This year, the strategy introduces a standard 3% increase to account for inflation, ensures that pricing stays competitive within the local market, and provides appropriate funding to enable the Town to continue to deliver professional and high-quality services. Each adjustment has been carefully reviewed to safeguard participation levels and to maximize accessibility to programs. Where appropriate, based on market review and prior fee adjustments, some fees are recommended to increase in the range of 0% to 3%. This approach allows services to remain accessible while applying sound financial management.

Key updates for 2025 include:

- Recreation Ice Sport PASS:
 - Regular (Package of 10/30): An 8% increase, aimed at staying competitive with market standards, resulting in an approximate \$5 increase per package or \$0.25 per visit.
 - Prime Time (Package of 10): 8% increase, in line with current market trends.
- The introduction of a 30-day Aquafit Membership.
- Cultural Services has been added to the rate schedule, aligned with the divisions of Community Services and to reflect the department's growing range of services.
- A new in-ice logo advertising option has been introduced, offering businesses enhanced opportunities for brand promotion.
- Cemetery fees have been adjusted by 3% to align with inflation.

Planning and Development

All fees have been indexed by 3.0%, except for the printing and documents section, which remains unchanged. In April 2024, Planning & Development initiated a review of the current development application fee structure. This review aims to update the fee structure adopted in 2018 to reflect changes in the Town's staffing levels, internal processes, and the impacts of Bill 23. The review is expected to conclude by late 2024 or early 2025, at which time a new fee structure will be presented to Council for approval. Once approved, the rates and fees by-law will be amended to reflect the new rates for all future applications.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to provide responsive, effective municipal government and strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public notice has been placed on the Town's website notifying the public that the 2025 rates and fees are being reviewed by Council at the meeting on October 28, 2024.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

The 2025 Rates and Fees were reviewed by each of the impacted departments to ensure completeness and full cost recovery where applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The revenue collected from these rates and fees was considered in the preparation of the 2025 annual budget and is used to offset, where possible, the associated operating expenditures. By charging fees and rates directly to the user who benefits from the service, the Town is able to alleviate some of the pressure on those who pay property taxes, by minimizing the impact on the annual tax levy.

Reviewed and approved by,

Moya Jane Leighton, Treasurer

Laura Lancaster, Commissioner of Corporate Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer