



REPORT

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

FROM: Joseph Vandermeer, Deputy Treasurer

DATE: November 17, 2025

REPORT NO.: CS-2025-027

SUBJECT: 2026 Rates and Fees

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CS-2025-027 dated November 17, 2025, regarding the 2026 Rates and Fees be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the 2026 Rates and Fees be approved by Council as outlined in Appendix A;

AND FURTHER THAT a By-law to establish the 2026 Rates and Fees be approved and that By-laws 2024-0087 and 2025-0049 be repealed.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 2026 budget process.
- Watson & Associates conducted a review of the Clerks, Corporate Services, Fire Services, and other miscellaneous fees in 2026.
- The proposed adjustments to the 2026 rates and fees reflect inflationary impacts and an appropriate level of cost recovery for the delivery of associated services.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

In accordance with the Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25, as amended, municipalities are required to submit all proposed rates and fees for Council approval on an annual basis. As part of this process, Council must adopt a by-law each year that establishes the full schedule of fees and rates to be levied by the Town of Halton Hills.

When considering new fees or adjustments to existing ones, departments consider a range of factors, including a detailed analysis of the cost of service delivery such as staff time, equipment, utilities, supplies, and postage. Staff also review the rates and fees of comparable or neighbouring municipalities and consider broader market factors, including service demand and cost recovery objectives.

For the 2026 Rates and Fees Review, staff assessed departmental fees and rates relative to the cost of providing services and conducted a comparative analysis with neighbouring and similarly sized municipalities. In addition, Watson & Associates completed a comprehensive review (Appendix B) of fees for the Clerks Department, Corporate Services, Fire Services, and other miscellaneous areas. The proposed 2026 rates and fees are summarized in Appendix A.

It is important to note that not all recommendations from Watson & Associates are reflected in the Town's Rates and Fees By-law. The consultant's review serves as a guiding framework to ensure the Town is charging appropriate and defensible fees that achieve a reasonable level of cost recovery.

Each department has provided a rationale for their proposed changes, which are summarized below.

Office of the CAO – Clerks

Staff are recommending the introduction of the following new fee:

- Off-Site Storage Record Retrieval

This fee is intended to recover the costs associated with retrieving files from off-site archives, including staff time and the resources required to locate, access, and transport the requested records.

Watson's comprehensive review identified that business license fees should be increased by approximately 20% to achieve closer to full cost recovery. However, staff are recommending that such an increase not be implemented at this time, due to the challenging economic conditions. Instead, most license fees are being indexed by the inflationary rate of 3% and rounded to the nearest dollar.

It is common practice for municipalities to maintain business licensing fees below full cost recovery to ensure that fees remain reasonable and support a fair and accessible environment for local businesses.

All other applicable fees have been indexed by 3%, with minor rounding adjustments to achieve even dollar amounts.

Corporate Services

Staff are recommending the following fee adjustments, consistent with the recommendations contained in the comprehensive fee review conducted by Watson & Associates:

- Basic Map – Digital Image Export (Increase of 10.5%)
- GIS Paper Products – Standard and Oversized (Increase of 10.5%)
- Ownership Change (Increase of 29%)
- Arrears Notice Fee (Increase of 67%)
- Conducting of Tax Sale (Increase of 140%)
- Extension Agreements (Increase of 243%)
- Mortgage Company Administration Fee (Increase of 100%)
- Request for Overpayment Refund (Increase of 40%)

These increases reflect the findings of the review and ensure that the Town is achieving higher cost recovery for the associated services.

In addition to the proposed fee increase for Arrears Notices, staff are recommending a change to the issuance schedule. Arrears notices will be issued in March, May, July, October, and December, aligning with the months following property tax due dates. This schedule provides timely reminders to property owners who have missed payments while reducing unnecessary administrative workload. Monthly notices are no longer required, as staff maintain regular communication with property owners who are in significant arrears.

Other fees have been indexed by 3% where applicable.

Fire Services

Staff are recommending an increase of approximately 103% to the Commercial Burn Permit fee for the following reasons:

- **Current fee structure:** The existing low fee may encourage open burning rather than the use of alternative waste disposal methods such as bin rentals (approximately \$500) or recycling.
- **Non-compliance issues:** Instances of burning prohibited materials require staff intervention.
- **Complaint response costs:** Staff time is required to investigate and respond to complaints.
- **Regional consistency:** Neighbouring municipalities including Mississauga, Milton, Brampton, Caledon, and Erin do not permit commercial burning.

All other fees have been indexed by 3%, with minor rounding adjustments to the nearest whole dollar.

Transportation and Public Works

Building Services rate increases exceeding 3% were determined using a benchmarking approach that compared user fees across Halton Region municipalities. The rates for each occupancy type were averaged, and the resulting 2026 user fees remain below the regional average. These adjustments have been confirmed to adequately support the direct and indirect operating costs of the Building Services Division.

A new fee has been introduced for zoning certificate requests submitted by owners or applicants requiring a detailed review of a property to confirm zoning compliance and conformity with applicable law prior to a building permit submission.

An additional fee has been established for farm buildings now regulated under the 2024 Ontario Building Code, which took effect on January 1, 2025. The updated Code introduces new requirements for large farm buildings exceeding 600 m² in area, categorizing them based on risk levels, including instances where buildings are occupied by people.

A new fee has also been implemented for the issuance of occupancy permits as required under Division C of the 2024 Ontario Building Code. This fee aligns with the minimum administrative hourly rate for building services and is intended to recover the administrative costs associated with issuing a formal certificate of occupancy. The issuance of formal certificates has gained increased importance following recent amendments under Bill 17, which allow deferral of development charge payments for certain residential occupancies until occupancy is granted.

For other Transportation and Public Works Divisions, Watson & Associates are recommending fee increases for Road Occupancy Permits, Load Exemption Permits, Overweight Permits, and Traffic Data Collection services to align with comparable municipalities and achieve full cost recovery.

Applicable remaining fees within these divisions have been indexed by 3%.

Community Services

The rates and fees strategy for Community Services provides a structured and transparent framework for annual rate adjustments. For 2026, a standard inflationary increase of 3% has been applied to align with local market conditions and rising operational costs. However, adjustments are made with careful consideration of the level of community benefit associated with each service. Where high community value is identified, increases may be reduced or waived entirely, resulting in a range of 0% to <3%. This flexible approach ensures that fees remain fair, accessible, and do not negatively impact participation.

Additionally, the strategy supports consistency and responsiveness in service delivery. For example, Cemetery Services have implemented a 3% increase in alignment with the inflationary recommendation, reflecting both market standards and the need to sustain service quality.

In addition to the standard inflationary adjustment of 3%, a few select fees have been increased beyond this threshold to better reflect market value and individual benefit. For example, the full-colour advertisement in the Hillsvie newsletter has been increased by 15%, aligning it more closely with comparable advertising rates and recognizing its high promotional value to local businesses. Similarly, the Plein Air event entrance fee has been raised by \$5 per entry, addressing its previously below-market pricing and the direct benefit it offers to participants.

Planning and Development

All fees have been indexed by 3.0%, except for those in the Printing and Documents section, which remain unchanged.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan

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 2026 Building rates and fees are being reviewed by Council at the meeting on November 17, 2025.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

The 2026 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 2026 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 can 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 and Acting Commissioner of Corporate Services

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer