

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR
Office of the City Treasurer - Finance

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

"Our City is built on relationships – between citizens and their government, businesses and public institutions, city and region – all interconnected, mutually supportive, and focused on the brightest future we can create together."

LiveLink REPORT #: 17853 MU2015	Report Date: July 13, 2015
Author's Name: Tony Ardovini	Date to Council: August 4, 2015
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To: Mayor and Members of City Council

Subject: 2015 Request from the Windsor Utilities Commission (WUC) for a Contribution to their Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP)

1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide: Ward(s): _____

THAT Council **APPROVE** a contribution of \$37,500 from the sewer surcharge reserve fund to the Windsor Utilities Commission's Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP); and further

THAT \$37,500 **BE INCLUDED** on an annual basis in the Sewer Surcharge Operating Fund starting in 2016 to fund this initiative.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

2. BACKGROUND:

The City of Windsor in the past has received requests from WUC for a contribution in the amount of \$37,500. The WRAP is intended to assist those in need in our community with payment of WUC bills for water and wastewater services. City Council most recently approved a similar request from WUC for this program in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014.

3. DISCUSSION:

The WRAP is a WUC program intended to assist low-income families, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill with their payment of water and sewer surcharge bills. A program outline provided by WUC is attached to this report detailing the 2015 WRAP program.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

By approving funding for the sewer surcharge component of the WRAP Program, the City will continue to assist residents requiring assistance with payment for the basic living needs of water and wastewater services. Not approving this contribution will likely result in hardship to these residents.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Sewer surcharge funds are collected by WUC on behalf of the City through the WUC customer's water bill. WUC has approved \$25,000 from their operating budget and the \$37,500 request from the City is intended to match their contribution at the historical rate of 150% sewer surcharge rate.

The table below provides historical data related to the WRAP program and the assistance provided on the sewer surcharge component of the water bill dating back to 2008. During this same period, the City has funded \$225,000 (i.e. \$37,500 in each of 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014). No request was made by WUC in 2010 as there were sufficient funds remaining in the account to cover 2010 payments. Sewer WRAP funds for 2011 and 2012 were not completely allocated in the 2011 and 2012 calendar years and the residual monies were used to assist customers in the following calendar years thereby increasing the dollars allocated for 2012 and 2013. It should be noted however, that the 2013 WRAP funding for sewer debt was received and allocated to customers in its entirety during the 2013 calendar year. Once the 10% administrative charge paid to Housing Information Services for administering the program is included (approximately \$20,381), almost the entire \$225,000 will have been used up for the wastewater portion of the WRAP program.

YEAR	Number of accounts receiving assistance	Dollars allocated
2008	190	\$22,114.03
2009	171	19,011.64
2010	201	22,785.69
2011	103	12,825.81
2012	295	39,019.17
2013	366	54,307.12
2014*	153	21,347.20
2015**	81	12,402.83
TOTAL	1,560	\$203,813.49
	Average Funding received per account	\$130.65

*Replenishment of WRAP funds approved by City Council on July 21, 2014

**Funds carried over from 2014 funding and used in 2015

The approval of the \$37,500 request in 2015 will allow the WRAP program to continue to assist qualified customers with the sewer surcharge component of their water bill. There are sufficient funds in the sewer surcharge reserve to fund this initiative.

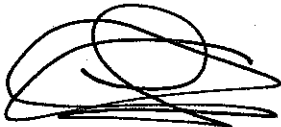
Given City Council's support of this initiative in recent years, it is being recommended that an annual budget of \$37,500 be included in the 2016 Sewer Surcharge Operating Fund to fund this initiative on an annual basis.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

Brian Pougnet, Controller Enwin Utilities Ltd.

7. CONCLUSION:

Although the current economic climate in the city is improving, the number of people requiring assistance with payment for basic living needs such as water and wastewater services remains. The City of Windsor in the past has recognized the requirement to help those in need and the benefits of the Water Rate Assistance Program to the community-at-large.



Tony Ardovini
Deputy Treasurer, Financial Planning



Onorio Colucci
Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer and
Corporate Leader Finance and Technology



Jelena Payne
Community Development and Health
Commissioner



Helga Reidel
Chief Administrative Officer

TA

APPENDIX: A – 2015 WRAP Program Outline

DEPARTMENTS/OTHERS CONSULTED:

Name:

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NOTIFICATION:

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Water Rate Assistance Program

Background

The Unemployed Help Centre and Housing Information Services became partners in 2004 to provide a much-needed program in the Windsor and Essex County area called "*Keep The Heat*", an energy assistance program administered between the Unemployed Help Centre and Housing Information Services, and sponsored by *ENWIN* since 2004. The program is delivered by a host of community-based agencies serving residents of the Windsor and Essex County, and functions within a framework that is efficient and accountable to the community it supports and those who fund it.

Using the same premise for the low-income energy assistance program, Windsor Utilities Commission has developed a similar water assistance program that is outlined as follows. The "*WRAP*" program was initiated on January 1, 2008.

Mission

"*Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP)*" is a "made in Windsor solution" whose mandate is to provide water and waste water assistance to low-income families, the disabled, the terminally ill, and the elderly.

The parameters of the program are as follows:

- Funding dollars are allocated to ratepayers needing assistance with delinquent water/waste water charges owed to WUC and The City of Windsor.
- Each applicant approved for funding may receive up to a maximum of \$312.50 (maximum \$125.00 for water assistance and \$187.50 for wastewater assistance) in any given calendar year.
- Administration of the program is currently executed by the Unemployed Help Centre or Housing Information Services on an annual rotational basis (hereafter referred to as the "In-Take Agency".)

Funding

- Historically, Windsor Utilities Commission has created a "Credit Account" comprised of a corporate donation of \$25,000 (inclusive of administrative fees) for water assistance and the City of Windsor has donated \$37,500 (inclusive of administrative fees) for waste water funding to assist those water and wastewater customers who are in jeopardy of utilities disconnection.
- "*WRAP*" will be maintained by *ENWIN*'s Customer Service Centre, with monthly reconciliations provided to WUC's Controller.

Program Overview

1. The Customer receives a utility disconnection notification.
2. Designated In-take Agency completes "Utility Account Hold Request" form. Disconnection activity is suspended at this point.
3. The "Utility Account Hold Request" form comes, via e-mail, to "*WRAP*" which is administered by *ENWIN*'s Customer Service Centre.

4. Upon notification of applicant approval by the In-take agency, *ENWIN*'s Customer Service Centre will allocate the authorized funding dollars to the customer's account through a draw down adjustment.
5. If the applicant's request is denied, notification of the same will be sent to the *ENWIN* Customer Service Centre and the "Account Hold" will be lifted and disconnection activity will resume.

WUC Contact For "WRAP" Program:

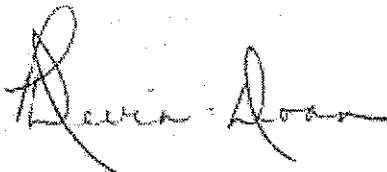
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Program Logistics

1. The In-Take agency will require the customer to fill out an application form.
2. The In-Take Agency will obtain a "consent to release" written authorization from the customer to discuss their water and wastewater account with *ENWIN*.
3. The In-Take Agency will contact *ENWIN*'s Customer Service Centre to apply a disconnection hold to the customer's water / wastewater account. The In-Take Agency will obtain the status of a customer's account (i.e. arrears level).
4. Within three business days (24 working hours), the In-Take Agency will contact *ENWIN* to advise that the customer is receiving water and/or wastewater assistance (amount). *ENWIN* will also be notified if the customer's application has been denied (at which point the In-Take Agency will advise the customer that the disconnection will proceed unless they can produce other funds to defer the disconnection of service).
5. If funding is approved, an adjustment within the *ENWIN* Customer Information System will be applied to the customer's account.
6. The prescribed adjustment will be utilized to track "*WRAP*" payments and will allow *ENWIN*'s Customer Service or Finance department to quantify how much of the WUC donation has been spent at any point of time.
7. Further, the adjustment will print on the customer's billing with a description of "*Water Rate Assistance Program*" which will identify to them the source of the credit on their bill.
8. The maximum one-time annual "*WRAP*" contribution per customer will be \$312.50 (\$125.00 for water and \$187.50 for wastewater services).
9. *Water Rate Assistance Program* administration work will be done by *ENWIN* (acting on behalf of WUC & the City of Windsor) and will update the cheques and balances from "*WRAP*" Credit Account. Reconciliation of the allocated dollars will be completed, on a monthly basis, by the Customer Service Centre and the In-Take Agency.



Patricia Devin-Doan
Director, Customer Service
ENWIN Utilities Ltd.