

Finance Department – FAQ

Updated: May 6, 2020

Will the City provide property tax relief for taxpayers?

Council has approved a new utility fee relief program for residential homeowners in Chilliwack that have stopped working due to COVID-19. Under the program, homeowners may be eligible to receive three months of credit on their utility bill for water and sewer fees. The credit amount is based on average monthly water and sewer usage.

To apply for the City of Chilliwack's COVID-19 Utility Fee Relief Program:

1. Apply for the BC Hydro "[COVID-19 Relief Fund for residential customers](#)" program, if eligible.
2. Email confirmation of acceptance to BC Hydro's program to the City of Chilliwack's Finance Department at utilitiesbillings@chilliwack.com. Confirmation can include a copy of the BC Hydro acceptance letter or a recent BC Hydro invoice depicting the BC Hydro COVID-19 relief credit.

Both the Federal and Provincial governments have announced aid and stimulus plans for individuals and businesses affected by the effects of COVID-19. The City of Chilliwack will continue to monitor the roll out of these aid programs and ensure those in need are directed to the appropriate location. Unlike the Federal and Provincial governments, local governments cannot run a budgetary deficit, thereby, impacting the types of relief options that municipalities can consider. However, the City will continue to explore any possible actions that can be taken to ease the impacts for its residents and taxpayers.

Under the Province of B.C.'s [COVID-19 Action Plan](#), announced on March 23, 2020, businesses and light and major industry will see the school tax portion of their 2020 property taxes cut in half. On average, the School Tax portion makes up approximately 30% of total property taxation levies. This will provide immediate relief to businesses that own their property and also allow commercial landlords to immediately pass savings on to their tenants under triple-net leases.

Will the City extend the due date for property taxes?

The City of Chilliwack is governed by provincial legislation under the *Community Charter* and follows the "General Tax Collection Scheme", which states that "property taxes for a year are due on July 2 of the year". The Provincial Government has not yet announced any changes to this due date, however, the City will continue to monitor any future announcements that may include this provision.

In order to further assist homeowners who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year, late property tax payment penalties will be postponed until October 1, 2020. Property tax payments for all property classes made by September 30, 2020 will not be subject to late payment penalties.

Will the City waive penalties and for property taxes not paid by the due date?

The *Community Charter* legislation also mandates municipalities to charge late payment penalties to property tax amounts not paid by the due date. This ensures all taxpayers are treated equitably. The Provincial Government has also not announced any changes to this penalty stipulation, however, the City will continue to monitor any future announcements that may include changes to this provision.

Will the City waive interest charges on overdue utility (water, sewer and garbage collection) fees?

Yes. At the Special Regular Meeting of Council held on March 25, 2020, Chilliwack City Council approved waiving interest charges on unpaid utility invoicing, effective immediately, with a reassessment on June 30, 2020.