

# Water Meter Update and FAQ Jan 2026

As of today **Phase 2** of the water meter project is now completed. Between **Phase 1** and **Phase 2** nine hundred and ninety five water meters have been installed.

I have been informed by staff that yes there have been some complaints, however as of this month the number of complaints represent less than **One Percent** of the **total project**.

I know that some residents have taken to Social Media to raise concerns over water pressure and expansion tanks. Staff have prepared the following information

- **Pressure Inquiries-** Minor head losses from the meter setter check valves, bends and fittings will cause minor pressure loss. People who have household PRVs can try adjusting the setting to increase the pressure. Most household PRV's also have a screen built into the body. With the water isolated off and pressure released from the line, this screen can be removed and cleaned. I would recommend they use a plumber for this work.
- **Hot water tank inquiries-** Spitting T&P valve or unusual noises coming from the tank since the water meter was installed. This is where an expansion tank should be considered. A plumber should be consulted. Basically, the meter setter has check valves in it, this allows water to feed forward but not backward. When water heats up and expands it use to have the option to back pressure into the watermain, this is no longer possible with the meter setter check valves in place. Higher pressures, hotter temperature's may be why some people experience issues and others don't. An expansion tank is designed to mitigate this problem.

## So what are the next steps

There are one hundred and fifty water meters that were installed well before this project started. Some of those water meters are now how old and they are from a different manufacturer and they do require there own devices to read the meters. As the City of Campbell River uses this manufacturer for all their water meters, it is the City of Campbell River water staff that have the devices to preform water meter readings.

Engineering staff are looking into having these one hundred and fifty water meters replaced as it would be very beneficial to have only one water meter type and only one billing system. I anticipate that over the next few weeks I will have further information and I do anticipate these 150 water meters will be replaced.

## Moving to Meter Rates

Many residents are wondering when will meter rates will start, what will be the rate, what will be the billing frequency, and how much water can I use per month without incurring extra costs.

Moving from a flat rate to a metered water rate is a rather significant undertaking and it must be done in steps.

The current billing consists of the following;

- Flat rate charges or a quarterly meter charges
- A taxation component that is paid through our property taxes yearly. Over the past three years this taxation component has been held steady at the same rate and it collects just over a half a million per year.

The Campbell River Water System has the following basic parts ,

- Bulk water charges. Current these yearly charges are approx \$1.3 million per year
- Maintenance contract that provides 24/7 365 days per year support for all water line breaks
- Administrative charges and billing costs

and each part requires suitable yearly budget.

As this is a water utility service, the service must have sufficient funds yearly to pay all costs without running a deficit. In addition to the yearly costs, there is also a significant looming infrastructure replacement coming due as there is over 24 km's of Water Mains that are nearing end of life. There must be suitable yearly transfers to reserves as very soon the community will need to tackle this project that has a projected **Twenty Four Million Dollar** price tag.

## The Process

The SRD is looking to other jurisdiction who are fully on meter rates as this only makes sense. Why reinvent the wheel when there are so many jurisdictions on Vancouver Island that have successful water meter programs.

- Current SRD staff are reading water meters in the community as this is helping to locate water leaks in advance to the rate review.
- The meter reading for billing purposes need to be integrated into the Financial Software that is used by the SRD. This does require a custom built software update and that is already underway.
- It is anticipated that by the second quarter of this year the SRD will be able to send out mock water bills to all households that show your water usage now that you are on a meter.
- It is anticipated that by Sept 2026 the SRD will have accumulated enough data through meter readings to determine where meter rates need to be. I anticipate that the current water meter bylaw will be ready for any needed amendments for the Sept 2026 Board Meetings.
- While it is still unknown what the meter rates will be, it has already been determined at a very high level the following
  - There will be a basic quarterly charge that will include a quarterly allotment of water. I anticipate that the water allotment will be around 75 to 90 cubic m<sup>3</sup> for the quarter.
  - If residents use all their water allotment before the quarter ends then they will see additional charges on their quarterly billing. How much households will be paying is still to be determined.

- Excessive water use and what constituents excessive water use may also play a factor when the water bylaw is ammended.
- If the bylaw does get amended by Sept 2026 meter rates could potentially start in Jan 2027.

I recognize that for how many years the cost of water has been a challenge for many households. While the drastic flat rate increases have stabilized over the past four years the actual bulk water usage ( water being used by the community) has trended quite high when compared to other jurisdictions.

With these new water meters and their ability to detect leaks on the SRD side of the water system it is encouraging to already be seeing a downward trend. The more leaks are detected, the more households understand their own water habits, the more hopeful I am that this downward trend in water use will continue to help reduce the biggest bill and that is the bulk water costs.

When projected costs were done in 2018 this project was estimated to be \$1.8 million. When this project does complete the final bill be around \$3.6 to \$3.7 million. No tax payer money has been used as Area D was able to secure \$2.8 million from the province and with the Boards approval I did commit a further \$950 thousand in gas tax funds from Area D reserves.

If anyone has questions please contact me by email or you are welcome to call me. My email address is [jrice@srd.ca](mailto:jrice@srd.ca) and my cell number is 250-203-1598