



## Council approves new utility rates



**agent**<sub>h<sub>2</sub>o</sub> Town Council has approved the implementation of new water and waste water utility rates, which will come into effect September 1.

“Historically we have relied on property taxes to prop up the shortfall in the cost of providing utility services,” said Mayor Les Rempel, “and even these funds have proved to be inadequate. This approach is no longer feasible if we are to sustain our infrastructure and ensure the long term viability of our water resources.”

The new utility rates will address three key factors for the town: they will encourage environmental sustainability of water resources, create economic sustainability of the town’s infrastructure and promote equitable distribution of water costs among users.

The new water rates will include a \$17 service fee plus charges for usage during each billing period. For households who use 6,000 gallons or less, the cost is \$3.50 for every 1,000 gallons, for usage between 6,000-12,000 gallons the fee is \$4.50 per 1,000 gallons, and for residents who use 12,000 – 18,000 gallons of water during the two-month billing period, the fee will be \$7 for every 1,000 gallons. For residents who use more than 24,000 imperial gallons, usage charges will be \$9.50/1000 gallons.

“As an example, for an average family of four who use 7,000 gallons of water over two months, their water bill would be \$42.50,” said Downey. “This is still substantially less than average Alberta communities, but an increase for High River residents. This equates to around \$5.80/

month more in water charges.”

However, for families who are conscientious water users and conserve their consumption, they’ll reap the benefit in lower water and waste water bills.

The new residential waste water rates include a \$15 service fee plus \$7.25 per 1,000 gallons of usage. “To ensure that we were being fair in assessing how much waste water a family produces, we are taking their average water consumption during the winter months and using this as the amount we charge through the summer months. Therefore residents will not be charged for their summer outdoor usage on their wastewater rates,” said Downey.

“Say a family uses 5,500 gallons of water in the winter but in the summer, this goes up to 8,000 gallons because they are watering gardens etc. We will still base their waste water charges on the 5,500 gallon usage,” he explained.

“Waste water treatment is becoming extremely expensive as environmental standards have become more stringent, so it is impossible to continue providing this service without a fee that reflects cost recovery,” said Town Manager Harry Harker.

“In the next five to 10 years we are going to have to complete a number of essential capital projects to meet environmental standards for our water and waste water,” said Harker. “These include significant upgrades and expansion of our water treatment plant, new sewer and water lines, and major improvements to our waste water treatment plant. This new fee structure will ensure that the town will be able to meet these demands.”

## Capital projects required for maintaining High River’s infrastructure

When the Town started to review its utility fees, a key rationale for implementing new rates was the need to cover the cost to maintain and upgrade the water system infrastructure. This includes everything from the two treatment plants - one for potable water and one for waste water- to the labyrinth of sewer and water lines that provide this service to every business and residence.

Environmental standards have continued to tighten, with stricter standards for purifying potable water and much lower tolerance for acceptable effluent levels in waste water that

is released into the environment.

This has required all communities to install higher efficiency systems to remove sediment and bacteria from the water.

The revenue from the new utility rates will be channelled into these essential capital projects.

### Water:

- Water main replacement
- Above ground infrastructure upgrades/replacement
- Well head upgrades

- Water supply connections
- Pressure management
- New reservoir
- Ultimate Water Plant Upgrade

### Wastewater

- Main replacement program
- Above ground infrastructure upgrades/replacement
- 2 major lift station upgrades
- Force main remediation from flood damage
- Wastewater plant upgrade
- Disposal system upgrade or change

# New utility rates beginning September 1, 2010

## Water Rates:

### Residential:

Service Fee: \$17 (for 5/8" metre) Plus:

0 to 6,000 g -	\$3.50/1,000 g
6,001 - 12,000 g -	\$4.5/1,000 g
12,001 - 24,000 g -	\$7 /1,000 g
Over 24,001 g -	\$9.50/1,000 g

### Commercial:

Service fee - \$20 (5/8" meter)

Plus:

0 to 3,600 gallons	\$3.50/1,000 g
3,601 to 40,000	\$5 /1,000 g
Over 40,001	\$6 /1,000 g

## Waste Water Rates:

### Residential

Service fee - \$15 (5/8" meter)

Plus \$7.25/1,000 gallons of usage  
This is based on the average water

consumption during the winter months. (The Town is not charging for summer outdoor usage on the wastewater rates.)

A \$27 monthly fee will be assessed for owners who do not have one year's continuous winter consumption history or no water meter.

### Commercial

Service fee - \$16 (5/8" meter)

Plus \$7.50/1,000 gallons of usage

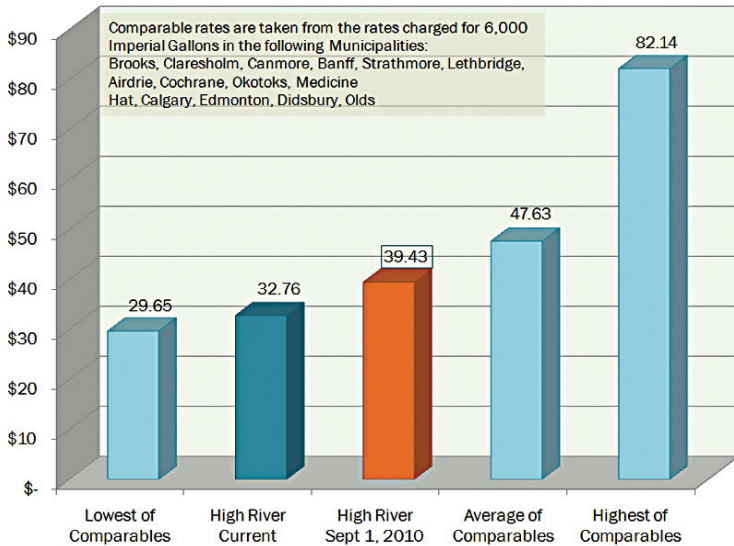
## Putting utility rates into perspective

High River is following a nation-wide trend in implementing utility rates that represent the actual cost of providing water services to the community. But how do these new rates stack up against other Alberta communities?

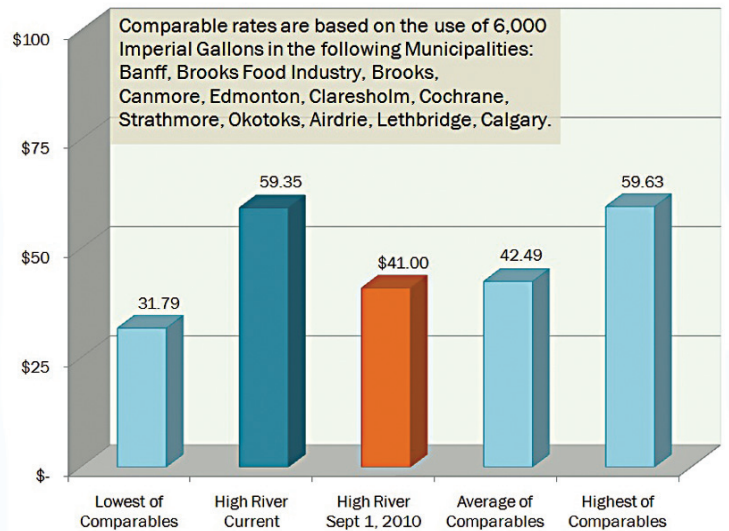
The Operations Department completed a comprehensive comparison

of rates of municipalities around the province. The graphs show High River's current fees, as well as the rates for September 1 for households and businesses who use approximately 6,000 gallons (27,000 litres) during a two-month billing period. It is important to note that not all communities have fees that represent full cost recovery as High River has implemented.

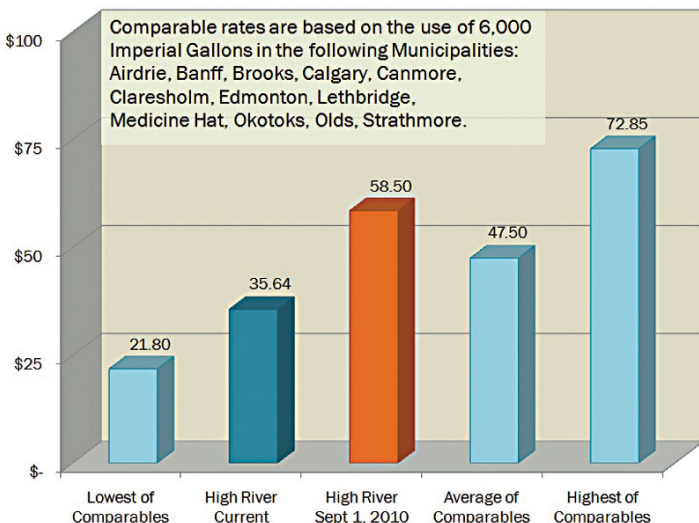
**Water Residential Rates / 6,000 Imperial Gallons**



**Water Commercial Rates / 6,000 Imperial Gallons**



**Waste Water Residential Rates / 6,000 Imperial Gallons**



**Waste Water Commercial Rates / 6,000 Imperial Gallons**

