

Water Contingency

As per By-Law #55 (East River Low Flow Contingency), we will closely be monitoring the Town's water levels as we begin to navigate through the warmer months of 2021.

Last year, thanks to the residents of Stellarton, we saw a decrease of water usage by roughly 34% during our period of water restriction. When called upon to take action, you all stepped up and helped us to conserve water!

It's anticipated that these stages will come into effect during the summer months. The Town has several ways to inform residents of these changes: Online via social media and on the Town's website, through a designated phone line, with the use of signage out front of Town Hall, and the local radio stations.

Residents can expect the following restrictions during each stage:

Stage 1—Alternate Day Use

Restricted Use:

- Sprinkling, watering or irrigating of shrubbery, trees, lawns, grass, plants, vegetables, flowers, etc.
- Filling or topping of pools.
- Washing of motor vehicles.

Above use restricted to the following:

- Even numbered addresses permitted on even calendar days (2, 4, 6, etc.) from 6am to 11am and 7pm to midnight.
- Odd numbered addresses permitted on odd calendar days (1, 3, 5, etc.) from 6am to 11am and 7pm to midnight.

Stage 2—Twice a Week Use

Restricted Use:

- Sprinkling, watering or irrigating of shrubbery, trees, lawns, grass, plants, vegetables, flowers, etc.
- Filling or topping of pools.
- Washing of motor vehicles.

Above use restricted to the following:

- Even numbered addresses permitted on Saturdays and Tuesdays from 6am to 11am and 7pm to midnight.
- Odd numbered addresses permitted on Sundays and Wednesdays from 6am to 11am and 7pm to midnight.

Stage 3—No Outdoor Water Use

No person shall use water supplied by the Town for other than a domestic purpose or commercial purpose. No person shall use water outdoors for any purpose.

Schedule A Offences and Fines:

First Offence	\$100.00
Second Offence	\$250.00
Third Offence	\$500.00

Water Line: 902-752-6168

Web Link: <https://bit.ly/3c0zBHM>



Water Sampling Plan

Almost annually, Stellarton experiences a period in which there may be a taste and odour change to residents' water. Through third-party testing, we identified the presence of Geosmin and 2-Methylisoborneol (MIB) - two naturally occurring compounds—in our water supply. While these have had an impact on the taste and smell of the water, they are not toxic or harmful.

The Town's Water Treatment Plant (WTP) has developed an extensive sampling plan for testing of Geosmin/Microcystin in June 2021. The goal of the sampling plan is to determine the exact period in time these compounds are present in the raw and treated water with additional testing for other compounds that can be present. Since conventional water treatment will not remove these compounds, the Town will use this data to explore treatment options.

For more information: Stellarton.ca/town-of-Stellarton-water-update.html



STELLAR NEWS

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CONTACT US

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IMPORTANT DATES

Apr. 1 - Police Commission

Apr. 12 - Council

Apr. 21 - Planning Advisory Committee

Apr. 27 - Committee of the Whole

May 6 - Police Commission

May 10 - Council

May 19 - Planning Advisory Committee

May 24 - Committee of the Whole

June 3 - Police Commission

June 14 - Council

June 23 - Planning Advisory Committee

June 28 - Committee of the Whole

Mayor's Message

Dear Friends and Neighbours:

Spring is here, with its' promises of new beginnings. An ideal time to rejuvenate our spirit, mind, and body, with fresh air, sunlight, and time with family and friends. The winter season was relatively kind to us, only a few storms and mild overall. That helps us on an individual level, with increased access to outdoor time, and on the town level, as a manageable winter helps reduce our significant plowing and salting expenses.



We are grateful for the reduced expenditures, as the finances of the town are becoming tighter and tighter. Our revenue streams have shown little growth over the past five years. The average annual increase in our total revenue is less than 1%. The Province of Nova Scotia has Financial Condition Indicators (FCI's) that show the financial health of municipalities. Stellarton is always among the top in the province when it comes to these indicators, this shows we are financially healthy. You may remember the headline a few years back "Stellarton #1", that article was referencing the FCI's from the province, and we were tops in Pictou County. Stellarton achieved this through prudent financial foresight over decades. This council is determined to keep our town financially strong- that is our responsibility. This fiscal year (April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022) Council turned down an increase to our honorarium. We feel municipal resources are becoming leaner, and we need to lead by example.

As I mentioned before in past newsletters, the Province of Nova Scotia is monitoring our water withdrawal from the East River. The river is running almost dry in the summer months. I personally see this as I fish the East River in waders. During those months, the water level is so low, fish have problems navigating the river, water temperatures are very warm, and the water is not clear. We have smelled and tasted the effects of the low water in recent summers that even our expensive water treatment plant is having trouble keeping up. It appears we will have to invest significant money in the plant in order to eliminate the most recent odor and taste issue.

Water conservation also needs addressing. We are in the era of climate
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change. There is only one proven way to reduce water consumption, by 25% or more, that is residential water meters. The Town has installed commercial meters in most businesses already. There has not been a water rate study since 2006. In the Utility and Review Board (UARB) decision at that time, the Board expressed concern with the Town’s resistance to metering, stating that “The use of meters and having customers pay for all water used would be a significant step in promoting conservation.” Based on this, staff and council believe our next study will need to include residential water meters in order to receive Board approval. Besides that fact, meters are the right thing to do for the long-term sustainability of our East River and our environment. She has been good to us for many, many years; it is time for us to be good to her.

Council had a heavy duty sit down with staff during budget deliberations in March. We have a strong staff team; our finance position is held by a qualified accountant on contract as it does not require full time hours. We are very fortunate the person filling the role is most definitely strong at what she does, and is part of our team, contract basis or not. She laid it out for us. We need to make significant changes over the next five years, or our water utility, and the town in general, will be in serious financial straits. The Albion Business Park has cushioned the blow of revenue stagnation over the past decade, but even with that, we can only do so much. The Business Parks growth is one of our top priorities, however, we need a new revenue stream or significantly cut expenses of which there is very little to cut.

Council’s tough decision last term to close the rink was just the foresight you elected us to use. It is simply out of the tax base reach.

The water rates have not changed since 2006. Currently, a one-person home with limited water usage pays the same as a multi member home with a pool filled with Town water - this is not equitable. Council does not want to raise tax rates; it has not happened since 1997. We are the lowest taxed town in the county, by a significant margin. We are the only town without any user fees. To compare to New Glasgow, our rate is \$1.82, theirs is \$1.84. They have a solid waste charge of \$150 per dwelling and a sewer rate charge as well. We have a lower tax rate, and not one user fee. All our services are included under the one tax rate of \$1.82.

During the most difficult budget deliberations, that I have ever been part of, Council and staff began to chart an environmental and fiscal path forward, which will keep our town strong. We understand the need for water metering; and will be requesting approval from the UARB to proceed through a water rate study that will include the implementation of water meters. Once the meters are in place, which will be a couple of years away, as this is a significant project, we can then measure the water usage and with this information we will assess an appropriate water rate as well as be able to implement a sewer rate, which will be a new expense for your household. Council does not take this lightly. We know dollars are scarce all around. With the implementation of the sewer rate, council will increase the low-income residential tax break. Currently the income cut off is approximately \$25,935 and the rebate is \$200.00. We will increase both of those amounts, to help offset the financial impact of the new fee on our most vulnerable citizens.

With these strategic directions put in place, our town will be more sustainable over the long run, both fiscally and environmentally. The course charted forward will keep our town strong. Council did not like making these decisions, but staff showed us the icebergs ahead, and the only responsible thing to do was adjust the course. Perhaps we could have pushed the issue onto the next council, squeeze by a few more years, putting the town in an ever-worsening financial and environmental position. However, that is not the right thing for our Town, so your council is once again making the tough decisions. That is what you elected us to do. No matter how hard, just make the right choices for Stellarton. We believe wholeheartedly that is exactly what we are doing.

Danny

Community & Recreation

Summer Jobs

Youth employment opportunities for the Town are posted on our website and on our social media channels.

There are positions available in park maintenance, sport and recreation maintenance, day camp councilors, and day camp programmer.



Plow Damage

Anyone wishing to report plow damage to their property is asked to call Town Hall at 902-752-2114. You will be added to the list of properties that require attention.



Volunteer of the Year

We would like to celebrate Tanya Oldford-Cowley as the Town of Stellarton’s Volunteer of the Year!

Nominated by two separate individuals, Tanya made a huge impact on Pictou County when she organized the United We Stand Pictou County group to sew and deliver thousands of face masks to groups and individuals who lacked access to PPE during the early stages of the pandemic—and they continue to make masks today.

Tanya used her personal strengths to help take care of our community to the best of her ability in one of the most challenging years many of us have faced.

We’re proud to have amazing volunteers like Tanya in our community!

Administration

Low Income Property Tax Exemption

The Town of Stellarton has approved the low income property tax exemption for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. If your household income is \$25,935 or less, you are eligible for a \$200 rebate on your final property tax bill. This exemption will be applied to your tax account during the final property tax billing in September 2021. You must provide a copy of your 2020 Notice of Assessment received from the Canada Revenue Agency as proof of income. Forms are available by contacting the Town office at 902-752-2114 or from the Town of Stellarton website at: www.stellarton.ca.

Tax Billing

Property taxes levied by the Town of Stellarton are billed in instalments as follows: 50% of the assessed taxes are billed on April 1st of each year due in June. The remainder of the current year tax levy is billed on September 1st and due in November.

Stellarton Heritage Corner

Stellarton Cricket Team

“Champions of Nova Scotia, 1910”

Men identified as: Rev. R.W. Turner - score, J.F. McKenzie, H. Saunders, J.J. McKinnon, J.J. Grant - manager, Rev. Morris Taylor, Dr. C. Miller, R. Ferguson - captain, A. Jamieson, W. Cummings, A. McIntyre, George Cutten (mascot), J. Forrestall.



Credit: Stellarton Mining Museum Nova Scotia Archives

*Have a historic photo you want in the next newsletter? Send it and your story to paige.clarke@stellarton.ca