

## **Customer Service Practices for Utility Customers**

Kitchener Utilities is a division of the City of Kitchener. Community-owned by the taxpayers for more than 100 years, we strive to exceed customer-service levels and expectations. It is our goal to resolve any issues in a professional and timely manner.

Our customer service practices regarding utility billing and bill payment is outlined in this document. If you have any questions, please contact us at 519-741-2450 during daytime business hours or send an email to [RevenueCustomerService@kitchener.ca](mailto:RevenueCustomerService@kitchener.ca)

### **a) Bill issuance and payment.**

A utility bill will be produced monthly at approximately the same time each month, and may include one or more of the following charges in combination (as applicable): gas, water, sewer, rental water heater, stormwater.

As an option to paper bills, customers may choose paperless billing through ePost. To register your account, visit [www.epost.ca](http://www.epost.ca), and select 'City of Kitchener – Utilities'.

Utility bills are due when issued, although there is an allowance period of 17 days after the date of issue before late charges are applicable. A late payment charge of 2 per cent is applied for payments made after the late payment date as indicated on the bill.

For new accounts, the first bill should be received within three to six weeks after the effective date of the new service, and will include any charges or deposit amounts related to opening a new account.

### **b) Allocation of utility payments**

Payment is first applied to the oldest bills. If you have a tenant account with a deposit, the payment is applied to the deposit first, and then to the oldest bills.

### **c) Payment options**

1. Pre-authorized payment
2. Internet or telephone banking

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3. By mail addressed to:  
The Corporation of the City of Kitchener  
Finance and Corporate Services, Revenue Division  
PO Box 91113,  
Kitchener ON N2G 4R6
4. Payment box located at 200 King St. W.:
  - Young Street entrance of Kitchener City Hall
  - City hall rotunda
5. In person at City Hall – main floor  
(Cash, cheque or debit)
6. Through a banking machine or at a bank teller at most of the chartered banks in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. When using this payment option, please ensure that your bank provides this service and allow at least five business days for your bank to process the transaction and forward it to the city.

Cheques are payable to: City of Kitchener

#### **d) Equal payment plan**

Kitchener Utilities customers have the option of subscribing to an equal payment plan and may sign up for this plan any time of the year. Monthly equal billing plans are reviewed semi-annually and adjustments made as required. Accounts are reconciled on the 12<sup>th</sup> month.

#### **e) Disconnection for non-payment**

It is the expectation of Kitchener Utilities that customers pay their utility bills on time. In the event that does not happen, the following will occur:

1. After the account has met the arrears value of \$50 and 40-day threshold from date of issue, a message is printed on the customer's current bill, advising that the account is overdue and requires payment.
2. If the account remains unpaid after 60 days from date of issue, a letter is sent advising the customer that their service will be disconnected eight days from the date the letter was issued.
3. Collection officers call the customer advising that their account is overdue and is at risk of being disconnected.
4. If no payment arrangements are made within eight days as advised in the disconnection letter, a grace period of three additional days is given.
5. After the three days grace period is over, a collection officer delivers a 24-hour disconnection notice

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6. Payment arrangements can still be made after the 24-hour disconnection notice is delivered.
7. If no payment is received, the customer's service is disconnected.

**f) Tenant (security) deposits**

Residential and commercial tenants may be required to pay a tenant (security) deposit. The amounts are as follows:

Tenant deposit residential – Gas \$150

Tenant deposit residential – Water \$50

Tenant deposit commercial – Gas – Varies based on business type and size of building.

Tenant deposit commercial – Water – Varies based on business type.

The purpose for collecting tenant deposits is to allow Kitchener Utilities to limit uncollectible accounts to meet council expectations on overall management of bad debts.

The deposit may be waived for customers signing up for the pre-authorized payment plan. Kitchener Utilities reserves the right to charge the deposit to the account if the pre-authorized plan is revoked due to unacceptable payment history.

Tenants will be required to pay a security deposit to Kitchener Utilities when applying for service unless the customer is able to provide confirmation of a "good payment history" from another utility in Ontario. This payment history must be within the last 12 consecutive months.

Deposits may be required from any tenant who does not maintain payment history for the required time period.

Payments of deposits may be made in the form of cash, cheque, debit, bank line, phone line, pre-authorized, guaranteed letter of credit from the customer's bank, trust company or credit union.

The deposit will be added to the customer's first bill if the amount remains unpaid at the time of the application. All normal billing rules apply to tenant deposits added to a customer account.

**g) Arrears management programs**

The City of Kitchener will work with its customers to make reasonable payment arrangements for payment of outstanding arrears. For individuals who meet provincial low income criteria, information relating to receiving emergency financial assistance from the Region of Waterloo's social services programs will be made available upon request.

**h) Correction of billing errors**

Where billing errors have resulted in under-billing, the customer may be charged with the amount erroneously not billed for a period not exceeding:

- a) one year, in the case of a customer who was not responsible for the error, and could not have known there was an error, and
- b) six years in all other cases (for example, tampering or fraud)

Where billing errors have resulted in over-billing, the customer may be credited with the amount erroneously paid for a period not to exceed six years.

When a customer is responsible for the under-billing error, the utility may require payment of the full amount on the next bill or on a separate bill.

**i) Dispute resolution process**

The following outlines Kitchener Utilities' administrative procedure for resolving complaints by customers regarding utility billing and bill payments provided by the City of Kitchener

1. If a complaint is not resolved after contact with a revenue customer service representative (CSR), the customer may choose to escalate the inquiry to the supervisor of customer service, the supervisor of billing and meter reading or the supervisor of collections.
2. In the event that the dispute is not resolved in step 1 above, the customer may request to speak or correspond with the director of revenue.
3. In the event that the dispute is not resolved in step 2 above, the customer may request to speak or correspond with the chief financial officer.
4. Every effort is made to resolve the dispute as quickly as possible.

#### j) Account Information

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the City of Kitchener provides account information only to the customer on the account, unless it receives written or verbal consent from the customer to allow release of information to a designated third party. Account information may also be released to the solicitor acting on behalf of the vendor or purchaser of a property and with appropriate proof of consent to do so, to the individual's attorney under a continuing power of attorney, the individual's attorney under a power of attorney for personal care, the individual's guardian of the person, or the individual's guardian of property.

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