

## Mayor Lisa

# City of Victoria Stormwater Utility – A Primer

City of Victoria Stormwater Utility



In 2014 the City of Victoria will be rolling out its new Stormwater Utility. Modeled in part on a similar utility in Kitchener-Waterloo, the utility will remove the portion of money that comes to the City from residents and businesses from the property tax bill (about \$4.5 million per year). Instead, people will receive a utility bill based primarily on the percentage of non-permeable surfaces on a property. The good news? This is a user-pay system, you pay for what you use. And, it's possible to get up to a 40% credit on your stormwater bill by implementing rainwater catchment solutions on your property. The bad news? It's all a little bit complicated to understand! This blog post is meant to provide some resources to help.

A few weeks ago, City staff updated Council on the roll out of the proposed Stormwater Utility. This [powerpoint presentation](#) contains a great deal of detail, including a list of solutions that property owners can implement to get a rebate on their bill. This [CBC interview](#) I did with Jo-Ann Roberts on All Points West explains in a bit more detail how the utility will work. And this [Times Colonist](#) article has a helpful infographic that details what people can expect based on the class of property they own.

To be clear, and to clear up some more confusion around the issue, the Stormwater Utility isn't a new tax. The City will charge \$4.5 million *less* in property taxes in 2014; this is the amount that the City currently spends on the storm water system. Instead the City will charge residents, businesses and institutions for the portion of the storm water system they actually *use*. It's more fair that way. Right now, large institutions, like the provincial government for example don't pay *any* property taxes or any grants in lieu of taxes but there is still stormwater runoff that comes from their properties. Currently, everyone who pays property taxes is subsidizing this.

Finally, the Stormwater Utility is something that makes the City of Victoria a leader in Canada. It's innovative because it encourages people, at the level of their own properties, to take responsibility and leadership for creating solutions – like rain barrels, cisterns, raingardens, bioswales – that are good for the planet and good for the City's stormwater system.

In the twentieth century we put lots of pipes in the ground to deal with the City's stormwater runoff. In the 21st century we are implementing smaller-scale solutions. In the long-term, this will produce a savings for the City and taxpayers. If property owners, from single-family dwellers to large developers embrace the rainwater management techniques outlined in this [powerpoint presentation](#), in the long-run we will have more above-ground infrastructure which is less expensive to build and maintain, mimics what the earth already does, *and* can also be really beautiful (check on the raingarden at Fisherman's Wharf Park) and enhance public and private spaces.

Stay tuned at the City's [stormwater site](#) for more information including information sessions.