Minute No. 442
Minutes – Council – July 17, 2025

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

Item No. 5 Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council adopted the following:

1. That prior to the installation of the new meters, the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to present alternative options as described in the report, as well as an option to not have a transmitter installed on the property, to ratepayers who can provide proof of need of a medical exemption, such as a medical letter signed by a registered medical doctor in any of the Canadian provinces or territories, or proof of the ability to claim the Canada Revenue Agency Disability Tax Credit.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Eadie,
That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment be adopted.

In amendment,

Motion 4
Moved by Councillor Mayes,
Seconded by Councillor Eadie,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Item 5 of the report of the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment dated June 27, 2025 be amended by deleting recommendations 1 to 3 and replacing with the following:

1. That prior to the installation of the new meters, the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to present alternative options as described in the report, as well as an option to not have a transmitter installed on the property, to ratepayers who can provide proof of need of a medical exemption, such as a medical letter signed by a registered medical doctor in any of the Canadian provinces or territories, or proof of the ability to claim the Canada Revenue Agency Disability Tax Credit.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing

The motion for adoption of amendment was put.

Councillor Mayes called for the yeas and nays, which were as follows:

Yea: Councillors Dobson, Eadie, Gilroy, Mayes, Orlikow, Rollins, Santos, Wyatt and Sharma 9

Nay: His Worship Mayor Gillingham, Councillors Allard, Browaty, Chambers, Duncan and Lukes 6

Carried

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

The motion for the adoption of the item, as amended, was put.

Councillor Wyatt called for the yeas and nays, which were as follows:

Yea:	His Worship Mayor Gillingham, Councillors Allard, Browaty, Chambers, Dobson, Eadie, Gilroy, Lukes, Mayes, Orlikow, Rollins, Santos and Sharma	13
Nay:	Councillors Duncan and Wyatt	2

Carried

The following persons submitted communications with respect to the matter:

- Pierre Attalah
- Marco Cecchetto
- Charlene Currie
- Ana Esterin
- Ryan Falk
- Joyce Fox
- Margaret Friesen
- David Grant
- Marie Leblanc
- Jennifer MacBeath
- Barry Malowanchuk
- Nadine Schroeder
- Anne Thomas
- Laura Toppazzini
- Margreet van den Berg
- Shelley Wright

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On July 8, 2025, the Executive Policy Committee did not concur in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment and submitted the following to Council:

1. That the City not implement an Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System in order to maximize the full benefits of the AMI technology.

2. That a public education campaign be implemented to help address customer concerns by explaining safety standards and the benefits of AMI technology.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing.

The following persons submitted communications in support of the matter:

- Paul Héroux
- Marie LeBlanc
- Janet Schroeder
- Barry Malowanchuk
- Magda Havas
- Barbara Payne
- Shelley Wright
- Frank Clegg
- Jennifer MacBeath
- Anne Thomas
- Lisa Prefontaine
- Nadine Schroeder
- Margaret Friesen

The following persons submitted communications in opposition to the matter:

- Charlene Currie
- Lori Bettig

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 27, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment did not concur in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

1. That, prior to the installation of the new meters, the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to present alternative options as described in the report, as well as an option to not have a transmitter installed on the property, to ratepayers who can provide proof of need of a medical exemption, such as a medical letter signed by a physician registered with The College and Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba or proof of the ability to claim the Canada Revenue Agency Disability Tax Credit.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing.

The following people submitted communications with respect to the matter:

- David Grant
- Michel LaRiviere
- Kyle Weiss
- Dale Weiss
- Marco Cecchetto
- Anne Thomas
- Audrey Weiss
- Nadine Schroeder
- Katherine Hlady
- Laura Toppazzini
- Lori Bettig
- Erika Goodman
- Barry Malowanchuk

On June 9, 2025 , the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, and granted a further extension of time of up to 60 days to report back on the Preliminary assessment of the Opt-Out Program

On May 5, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, and granted an extension of time of 30 days to report back on the Preliminary assessment of the Opt-Out Program

On February 3, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, and granted an extension of time of 90 days to report back on the Preliminary assessment of the Opt-Out Program

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

On February 5, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, as amended, and approved the following:

1. That the report be received as information.

2. That Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide a preliminary assessment of the opt-out program to the Standing Committee in 360 days.

The following persons submitted communications with respect to the matter:

- David Grant
- Pat Werestiuk
- Laura Topazzini
- Lori Bettig
- Tracy Young
- Margaret Friesen, Director, Environmental Health Association of Manitoba,
- Kathy Milla
- Bill McFetridge
- Mike Houvardas
- Michelle Clark
- Gilles Lamoureux, Guided Digital Homeopathics
- Bonnie Hoffer-Steiman
- Bruce Kisell
- Johanna Lalman
- Lisa Bestvater

COUNCIL DECISION:

On November 23, 2023, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment and adopted the following:

1. That the capital project, Water Meter Renewals, with an AACE Class 3 capital cost estimate of $135,000,000, be approved and advanced to 2024.

2. That, subject to approval of Recommendation 1, any financial implications of the funding source, Water Meter Renewal Reserve, be referred to the 2024 - 2027 Budget process.

3. That the Public Service seek out all opportunities for external funding available to assist with the capital project, in accordance with Council priority setting.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment – June 27, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

4. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment in 90 days with details on a proposed opt-out program.

5. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

The following persons submitted communications with respect to the matter:

- Pierre Attallah
- Lori Bettig
- Eleanor Bond
- Mike Brentnall
- Marco Cecchetto
- Melissa Chalmers
- Frank Clegg, CEO, Canadians for Safe Technology
- Lori Curran
- Doaa Eldewek
- Margaret Friesen, Director, Environmental Health Association of Manitoba
- David Grant
- Sandy Guziak
- Dirk Jeebe
- Abdulrahman Khedr
- Ahmed Khedt
- Gilles Lamoureux, Health Practitioner, Guided Digital Homeopathics
- Marie LeBlanc
- Barry Malowanchuk
- Geoff McInnes
- Kathy Milla
- Suzanne Mouflier
- Saly Naser
- Carolee and Ken Neufeld
- Anne Thompson
- Laura Toppazzini
- Derek Vandall, Mortgage Broker, DLC Mainstream Mortgages
- Kim Verschoore
- Jessica Wiebe, Medical Lead Administrator
- Rodolfo Williams
- Shelley Wright, Founder and Director, Canadian Educators for Safe Technology

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
L. Szkwarek, FCPA FCGA Manager, Finance and Administration	T.W. Shanks, M. Eng., P. Eng. Director, Water and Waste Department	T. Graham	S. Armbruster, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Winnipeg has approximately 221,000 water meters for homes and businesses. Over 143,000 (65.5 percent) are past their service life and need to be replaced. Council has approved an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system to improve meter accuracy, customer service, fairness, and efficiency. On February 5, 2024, the Public Service was directed to provide a preliminary assessment of an Opt-Out Program.

The Public Service recommends against an Opt-Out Program. This is based on expert advice and the experience of other jurisdictions, as well as health, safety, privacy issues, and alignment with City Goals and Strategies. The Public Service recommends a public outreach and education campaign to address customer concerns. The option to install antennas outside the home or elsewhere on their property would be offered at the customer expense.

AMI transmitters send out radiofrequency signals, similar to many household devices. These data bursts are typically short (less than one second) and infrequent. Depending on the manufacturer, it can potentially be one transmission per day and scheduled for specific times. Health Canada states that “There are no health risks from exposure to radiofrequency EMF from smart meters. These devices must meet standards to ensure they do not exceed radiofrequency EMF exposure limits.[1]”

Opt-Out Programs in other cities have shown low participation rates. These programs have also been shown to lower the efficiency of AMI technology, by adding costs to customers who opt-out, maintaining legacy systems, and by requiring additional staff to perform the related works.

An Opt-Out Program will add up to $235,000 to $252,000 annually to the operating budget. This cost is to maintain the legacy system and cover the costs of a full-time meter reader required to obtain physical meter readings. Potential costs, using 2025 fees, are estimated as follows:

[1] https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-risks-safety/radiation/everyday-things-emit-radiation/smart-meters.html

Service	Fee	Frequency
Opt-Out fee	$240.00	One-time
Meter read fee	$79.00	For each read by City, frequency to be determined
Once AMS Project Complete – additional annual fee to support legacy systems	$490.00-$980.00	Annual fee. To be implemented once AMS project is complete in addition to the meter read fees.

Upon substantial completion of the project, the estimated participation rate of an Opt-out Program is 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent of 221,000 meters. Customers who elect to opt out could incur additional costs between $569.00 to $1,059.00 per year. This does not include the one-time opt out fee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the City not implement an Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System in order to maximize the full benefits of the AMI technology.

2. That a public education campaign be implemented to help address customer concerns by explaining safety standards and the benefits of AMI technology.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the foregoing.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On February 5, 2024, the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment directed the Public Service to provide a preliminary assessment of an Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System to the Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and Environment in 360 days.

On February 3, 2025, the Standing Policy Committee of Water, Waste and Environment granted an extension of time of 90 days to report back on the Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The City of Winnipeg has approximately 221,000 residential and commercial water meters. Over 143,000 (65.5 percent) are past their service life and need replacement. The Public Service recommended the renewal of the water meters and the implementation of an Advanced Metering System (AMS).

Benefits of having an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system include, but are not limited to:

- Early leak detection – Real-time data alerts customers to potential leaks, reducing the risk of unexpectedly high-water bills.
- Near elimination of estimated bills – Customers receive accurate bills based solely on their water usage.
- Safety and environmental conservation – City personnel will no longer need to access private properties or drive to read meters, reducing carbon dioxide emissions.
- Moving to monthly billing – Remote meter reading enables the City to transition to monthly billing, providing customers with more manageable and timely bills.
- Accessibility – assisting meter reads for customers with accessibility barriers.
- Additional information for water and wastewater modelling to assess the current distribution, collection and treatment systems and assist in future capital decision making.

On November 23, 2023, Council approved the Water Meter Renewals – Advanced Metering System project, with a class three estimate capital cost of $135,000,000. Council also directed the Public Service to report back to the Standing Policy Committee of Water, Waste and Environment with details of an opt-out program.

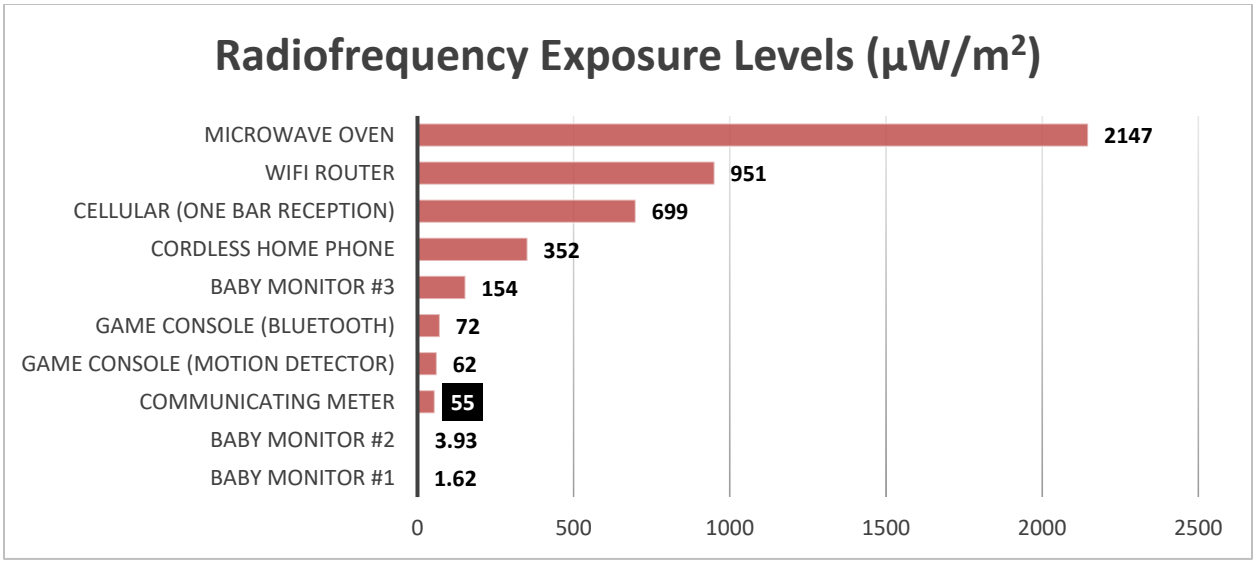
On February 5, 2024, the Public Service presented the Opt-Out Program for Advanced Water Metering System report to the Standing Policy Committee of Water, Waste and Environment (SPC WWE). SPC WWE directed the Public Service to report back with a preliminary assessment of an Opt-Out Program in 360 days. On February 3, 2025, SPC WWE granted an extension of time of 90 days to report back on the Opt-Out Program.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Technology Overview

An AMI system enables remote reading of water meters via low-power radio transmitters. These transmitters, which can either be integrated directly into the water meter or attached as an external component, transmit data in intermittent bursts to conserve energy and extend the transmitter's longevity. Typical radio signal durations are less than one second, once a day, and depending on the manufacturer, can be scheduled around customer requested times.

AMI systems operate within lower frequency ranges (such as 450Mhz, 900Mhz or 2.4 GHz) and power levels, ensuring their energy is far below thresholds that could cause harmful effects. AMI systems operate in similar frequency ranges to many household devices, but their transmissions are brief and infrequent, in contrast to devices like routers and cell phones that transmit continuously. These systems are primarily designed for safe and efficient communication of utility data.

Below is a chart showing the average exposure to radiofrequency emissions levels at a distance of one metre away from a communicating meter (which is what would be used with the AMI system), in comparison to a number of household devices. The average exposure to radiofrequency emission levels one metre away from a communicating meter area is 55,000 times less than Health Canada limits (March 13, 2015).



*Mean power density measured near common household devices. Testing by the Centre de Recherche Industrielle du Québec (CRIQ)
**For details on the measurement protocol used to obtain these values, see Rapport d'essais de compatibilité électromagnétique, Mesures comparatives des compteurs avances (compteur communicants), CRIQ file 670-47376-5 [2]
*** Limit recommend by Health Canada: 2,700,000 µW/m^2

In other jurisdictions, when customers express concerns with radio frequency exposure, the AMI antenna can be installed in a location on the exterior of the home, or at the edge of a property. The cost associated with running the additional cable and installing the antenna would be the customer's responsibility.

Health Canada Safety Code 6

Health Canada Safety Code 6 sets out recommended safety limits for human exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMF), which includes frequencies used by common household communication devices. Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED) uses Safety Code 6 to regulate all radio frequency devices sold in Canada.

As with any device that emits radiofrequency EMF, some of the energy emitted by smart meters is absorbed. The amount of energy absorbed depends largely on how close your body is to a smart meter.

Exposure to radiofrequency EMF from smart meters is very low. This is because:

- Smart meters emit relatively low power signals
- There is distance between your body and smart meters
- Smart meters transmit data in short bursts, not continuously
- When smart meters are not transmitting a signal, they do not emit radiofrequency EMF

Survey measurements of the radiofrequency EMF levels from smart meters during transmission bursts were found to be below the human exposure limits in Safety Code 6. This was for both indoor and outdoor measurements.

[2] https://www.regie-energie.qc.ca/fr/participants/dossiers/R-3770-2011/doc/R-3770-2011-B-0113-AUDI-REPENG-2012_03_30.pdf

As the AMI transmitter can either be integrated directly into the water meter or attached as an external component, the City can review concerns related to radiofrequency signals and mount transmitters to the outside of building to further mitigate related concerns. Dependent on the selected technology, the frequency of data transmissions may also be reduced.

If there is a change in the Canadian safety limits (Safety Code 6) on Smart Meters, the Public Services will review and address the changes in the AMI system to ensure compliance. For more on Smart Meters and Safety Code 6, see Appendix 1 – Safety of Smart Meters, Appendix 2 – Understanding Safety Code 6 and Appendix 3 - Technical Guide for Interpretation and Compliance Assessment of Health Canada's Radiofrequency Exposure Guidelines

Additional details are available online at:

Safety Code 6:
https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-risks-safety/radiation/occupational-exposure-regulations/safety-code-6-radiofrequency-exposure-guidelines.html

ISED Radio Frequency and Safety:
https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/spectrum-management-telecommunications/en/safety-and-compliance/facts-about-towers/radiofrequency-energy-and-safety

Data Privacy and Data Security

AMI systems handle sensitive customer data, requiring robust data privacy and security measures. While the technology is not yet defined, the typical measures that the City will take to ensure the security of privacy with AMI systems include:

- Encryption:
  - Data sent between collectors and the central system is encrypted to prevent unauthorized access.
  - Stored data is also encrypted for added protection.
- Access Control
  - Only authorized staff can access AMI data, with secure login systems in place.
  - Access is limited based on job roles, further reducing risk.
- Network Security
  - Firewalls and monitoring systems protect against cyber threats.
  - Secure connections are used for all communication within the AMI system.
- Privacy by Design
  - Only essential data, such as water usage, is collected.
  - Radiofrequency transmission includes a unique identifier that is not associated with an address or customer information.
- Data Retention and Deletion
  - Data is kept only as long as needed for billing and operations.
- Regular Reviews and Updates
  - Security systems are tested regularly to stay ahead of potential risks.
  - Policies are updated to match the latest regulations and technology standards.
- Customer Education
  - Customers will be informed about how their data is used and protected.
- Third-Party Security
  - Vendors supplying AMI technology must meet strict security requirements.

By taking these steps, the City ensures AMI technology is both effective and secure, building customer trust, while protecting sensitive information.

Jurisdictional Scan

The jurisdictional scan showed that some municipalities have an Opt-Out Program. However, of those municipalities, some have chosen to phase out their programs (Greater Region of Sudbury, City of Waterloo) or forego the program altogether (City of Regina, City of Barrie, City of Richmond Hill). They are phasing out or foregoing the program to maximize the benefits of the AMI system and reduce inefficiencies that are a result of operating and maintaining multiple systems.

Where Opt-Out Programs still exist, participation rates are typically low; approximately 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent based on a sample size of information gathered. The Opt-Out Programs in other municipalities often do not allow customers to manually read their water meter and include fees for manual meter reading services.

Discussions with other municipalities have noted that an Opt-Out Program without fees affects adoption of an AMI system, as customers "hold out", which in turn adds costs to the project. If the Public Service is directed to implement an Opt-Out Program, the introduction of the program would begin in 2027, when the City-wide deployment of the project commences.

Examples of Opt-Out Programs implemented by other cities in Canada include (2024 fees):

- The City of Toronto requires customers to allow an employee to access the water meter to obtain a meter reading three times per year, at a cost of $101.50 per reading. Customers are not required to submit readings for billing purposes, and no medical exemption is permitted.

- City of Edmonton/EPCOR requires customers to allow an employee access to the water meter each month to obtain a meter reading, at a cost of $49.03 per month. Customers are not required to submit readings for billing purposes, and no medical exemption is permitted.

- Customers in the City of Kamloops can request a manual read, non-radiofrequency meter be installed in their homes which entails hard-wiring a touch-read pad from the meter to an exterior wall outside of the property. A City employee must access the exterior of the property at the touch read device location once per quarter to obtain a meter reading. There is a fee of $25 per quarter for this option and no medical exemption is permitted.

The following are examples of manual meter reading fees, from 2024, as applicable in surveyed municipalities/systems:

Municipality	Fee	Frequency	Annual
City of Toronto	$101.50	Three times per year	$304.50
City of Waterloo**	$60.00	Two reads per year by City, four reads per year by customer	$120.00
Halifax Regional Municipality	$50.00	Quarterly	$200.00
City of Greater Sudbury	Phased out Opt-Out Program		
City of Edmonton (EPCOR)	$49.03	Monthly	$588.36
City of Saskatoon	$101.50	One time Opt-Out fee	
	$25.00	Monthly	$300.00 *
City of Kamloops	$25.00	Quarterly	$100.00
City of Penticton	$18.75	Monthly	$225.00
City of Kelowna	$42.40	Bi-Monthly	$254.40
City of Regina	No Opt-Out Program		
City of Richmond Hill	No Opt-Out Program		

* Excludes one time Opt-Out fee.
** to be phased out in 2025

Preliminary Assessment of a City of Winnipeg Opt-Out Program

The preliminary cost for an Opt-Out Program is estimated to be a one-time charge of $240.00, with City meter reading visits to cost $79.00 per visit while the City continues current operations and maintains existing systems. In addition, an estimated $445.00 to $890.00 annually per account would be required to cover fixed fee costs related to maintaining the existing system once the AMS project is complete and existing legacy systems/operations are no longer required. The estimated participation rate of an Opt-out Program is 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent of 221,000 meters.

Customers who elect to opt out could incur additional costs between $569.00 to $1,059.00 per year. This does not include the one-time opt out fee.

These fees are estimates at this time but would be refined once the technology is procured and associated workflow (e.g. read frequency, participation rate) is better identified.

The following reflects estimated costs (2025 fees) based on scenarios used in other jurisdictions (next page).

Scenario	Fee	Frequency	Annual
One time Opt-Out fee	$240.00	One-time Opt-Out fee	$240.00
Quarterly Billing – existing system	$79.00	One read per year by City, three reads per year by customer	$79.00
Quarterly Billing – no customer reads	$79.00	Four reads per year by City	$316.00
Monthly Billing – some customer reads	$79.00	Four reads per year by City, eight reads per year by customer	$316.00
Monthly Billing – some customer reads	$79.00	Six reads per year by City, six reads per year by customer	$474.00
Monthly Billing – no customer reads	$79.00	Twelve reads per year by City	$948.00
AMS Project Complete – additional annual fee to support legacy systems	$490.00-$980.00	Annual fee. To be implemented once AMS project is complete in addition to the meter read fees.	$490.00-$980.00

It is important to note that an absence of fees for an Opt-Out Program may lower participation in the AMS program, thereby reducing operational efficiencies, data accuracy, and related savings. The absence of fees would also require the costs associated with operations to be incorporated into utility rates for all customers, estimated at $235,000 to $252,000 annually (2025 fees). The estimate excludes costs for modifications to the billing system to accommodate an Opt-Out Program.

The estimated annual costs are based on the current practices for meter reads and the 0.1 percent to 0.2 percent participation rates experienced in other municipalities. The fixed fee costs would cover items such as; personnel, fleet, meter reading hardware/software, phone in billing reads system and maintenance of legacy systems that would otherwise not be required with AMS. Any changes to the participation rate and read frequency/method will affect the costs related.

Details of an Opt-Out Program will not be known until the water meter and related technology specifications are selected through the procurement process. The selection and award of the water meter and related technology is expected in Q1 2026.

The following is a general outline of how an Opt-Out Program might work:

- Through a public outreach program, the City would inform customers about the upcoming deployment of AMI technology and conduct educational programs to inform customers about the reasons behind the deployment, the benefits of advanced meters. It would also address any misconceptions or concerns. A typical outreach program could include informational materials such as letters, door knockers, websites, public information sessions, bill inserts, and training of customer services representatives.

- Customers who have concerns about privacy, health, or other reasons would be given the option to Opt-Out of having a radio transmitter installed on their property.

- Customers choosing to Opt-Out would be required to enter into an agreement that they:
    - Allow access to their property to have a new meter without an AMI transmitter installed.
    - Provide meter readings at least three times per year for billing purposes, by telephone or online through the MyUtility Portal.

    - Allow a City employee access to read and physically examine the meter at least once per year based on the existing business process of quarterly billing. Appointments would be required during regular business hours.
    - Ensure that the location of the meter inside the premises was safe and accessible. Limited accessibility and safety might result in not qualifying for the program due to meter location.
    - Would not qualify for leak detection programs, including the Water Leak Credit Policy, as early leak detection would be a function on the AMI transmitters and would be data-related.
    - Would not be eligible for additional customer services, such as data-related event alarms to detect higher water usage.

- If a medical exemption is permitted for a possible reduced or waived fee, customers would be required to submit a medical letter signed by a physician registered with The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. A medical exemption program may also require updated medical information at regular periods. Any additional operational costs to maintain the medical exemption process would be incorporated into the overall utility rates.

- The Opt-Out Program would need to comply with all bylaws and regulations concerning privacy and data protection and would need to be reviewed on a regular basis to assess its effectiveness, and address any emerging issues or concerns raised by customers.

- The Opt-Out Program would be limited to customers at specific premises at the time the AMS project is implemented at that premises. Once the resident vacates the premises, an AMI meter would be installed in order to restart the service. The City would not retrofit existing AMI meters with non-AMI meters.

Business processes and costs are being reviewed as part of the AMS project and are subject to change, pending Council's decision on whether to approve an Opt-Out Program.

Drawbacks of an Opt-Out Program

There are a number of drawbacks to implementing an Opt-Out Program beyond cost. It is essential to ensure project business drivers are aligned with Strategic Plans and Policies, such as:

- In the event that participation in an Opt-Out Program is high, resources will need to be re-evaluated to adequately determine the related costs. Higher participation in the Opt-Out Program will also lead to less data on water consumption which the City expects to use to assess the distribution, treatment and collection systems for future capital planning.

- Entering into residential households to read meters presents a safety concern to workers.

- An increase in vehicle kilometers travelled and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

- A reduction in accurate and timely reads increases the frequency of estimated and high bills due to incorrect information.

- The introduction of an AMI system will allow for timelier leak detection notifications preventing unexpected large bills, without the transmitter, this function would not be available.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** April 9, 2025

Project Name:

Opt-Out Program for the Advanced Metering System

COMMENTS:

There are no implications associated with the recommendations of this report

Lucy Szkwarek, FCPA, FCGA

Lucy Szkwarek, FCPA, FCGA
Manager Finance and Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

N/A

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

This report aligns with OurWinnipeg 2045 policies as follows:

Goal: Leadership and Good Governance

Objective 1: Establish and implement priority actions through evidence-informed decision-making processes.

> Policy 1.6 Results-Based Budgeting: Invest City resources in prioritized, proactive, long term community-beneficial outcomes.

Goal: Environmental Resilience:

> Objective 1: Prioritize the transition to a resilient, low-carbon future through demonstrated organizational and community leadership, and collaborative actions that mitigate and adapt to a changing climate.

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

This report aligns with Winnipeg Climate Action Plan as follows:

Strategic Opportunity #1 - Corporate Leadership

Key Direction 1.2 Understand and Integrate Business and Economic Implications of Climate Action into Decision Making Processes.

Key Direction 1.5 Reduce Employee Vehicle Kilometers Travelled (VKT) and associated GHGs.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

One of the guiding principles of the Poverty Reduction Strategy is to promote and maintain the welfare of all residents. By transitioning to the Advanced Metering System, the City will receive accurate and timely reads reducing estimated and high bills due to incorrect information, will allow for timelier leak detection notification preventing unexpected large bills related, and will help facilitate the transition to monthly billing to assist in household budgeting.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Water and Waste Department
Division: Finance and Administration
Prepared by: Duy Doan, C.E.T.
Date: May 22, 2025
File No.: W-1096

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Safety of Smart Meters
Appendix 2 – Understanding Safety Code 6
Appendix 3 – Technical Guide for Interpretation and Compliance Assessment of Health Canada's Radiofrequency Exposure Guidelines