

FORT ERIE WATER & WASTEWATER COSTS

A Large-Print Ratepayer Position Paper

Matt Paul - Candidate for Ward 4, Ridgeway

2026 combined monthly fixed charge

\$78.05

before a single cubic metre is used

2026 combined usage charge

\$5.21 / m³

water + wastewater; 1 m³ = 1,000 litres

Town-published budget share

61%

Niagara Region treatment costs

Fort Erie water/wastewater charges are user-rate fees, not the general property-tax levy. The bill has two parts: a fixed monthly charge and a metered consumption charge. Those rates fund Regional treatment, local delivery, infrastructure investment and debt.

My position: residents deserve safe, reliable water and sewers - and a bill that is understandable, tightly managed and fair to seniors, low-use households and working families.

Prepared August 2026 | Based on official 2026 Town of Fort Erie and Niagara Region documents.

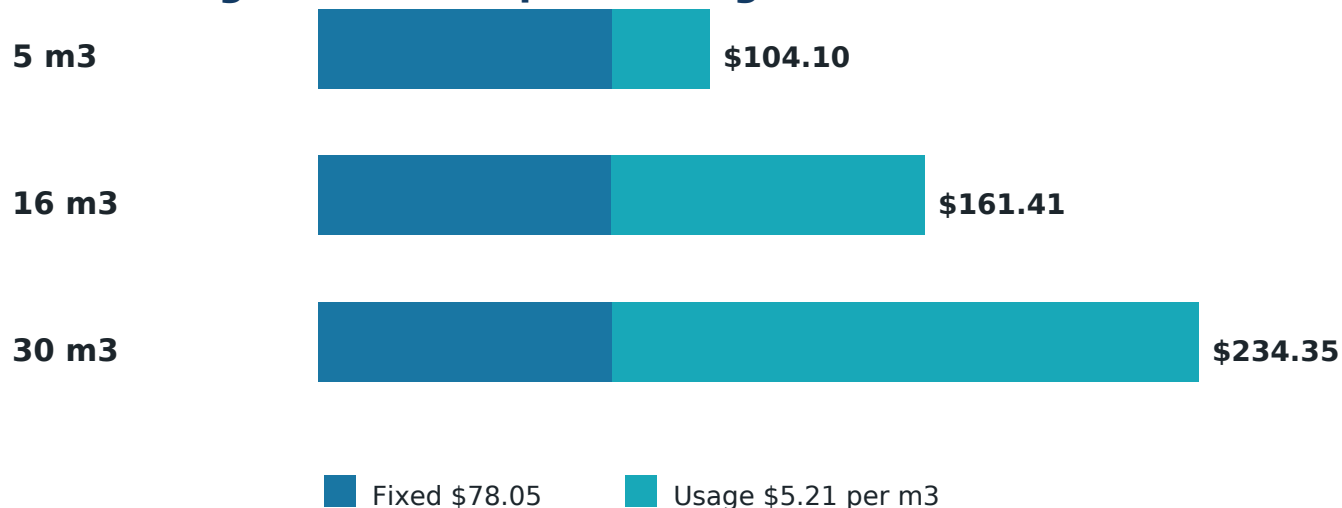
1. What is actually on a Fort Erie water bill?

For a typical residential meter under 25 mm, the 2026 bill is built from a \$78.05 monthly base charge plus \$5.210 for every cubic metre used. The base charge is \$29.56 for water and \$48.49 for wastewater. The usage charge is \$1.960/m³ for water and \$3.250/m³ for wastewater.

2026 residential charge	Water	Wastewater	Combined
Monthly fixed charge	\$29.56	\$48.49	\$78.05
Usage charge per m ³	\$1.960	\$3.250	\$5.210

Simple formula: Monthly bill = \$78.05 + (\$5.21 x cubic metres used).

Fixed charge vs. consumption charge



At the Town's 16 m³ monthly example, the bill is \$161.41. At 30 m³ per month, it is about \$234.35.

2. What different levels of water use cost

The same fixed charge applies even when consumption is low. That makes the rate structure especially important for seniors, seasonal residents and households that conserve water.

Monthly use	Monthly bill	Annualized	Fixed share
0 m3	\$78.05	\$936.60	100%
5 m3	\$104.10	\$1,249.20	75%
10 m3	\$130.15	\$1,561.80	60%
16 m3	\$161.41	\$1,936.92	48%
20 m3	\$182.25	\$2,187.00	43%
30 m3	\$234.35	\$2,812.20	33%
40 m3	\$286.45	\$3,437.40	27%

Three ratepayer takeaways

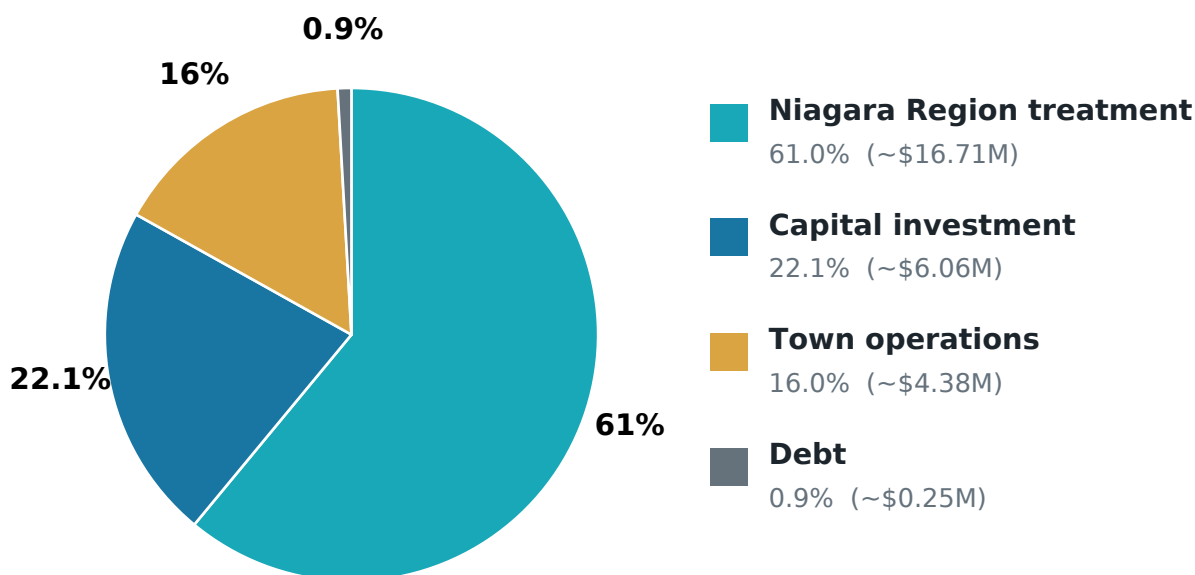
1. At 5 m3/month, roughly three-quarters of the bill is fixed.
2. At 16 m3/month, fixed and consumption charges are almost evenly split.
3. Conservation lowers the usage portion of the bill, but it cannot reduce the \$78.05 monthly base charge.

Fairness question: How much of the system should be recovered through fixed charges versus consumption charges? That balance deserves a public review, because it affects low-use households differently from high-use households.

Town example: 16 m3/month = \$161.41/month, about \$1,937/year.

3. Where does the water/wastewater budget go?

Fort Erie's 2026 public information sheet shows the largest share of the water/wastewater budget is attributed to Niagara Region treatment costs.



Approximate budget-dollar view using the Town's \$27.4 million public info-sheet total:

Budget use	Share	Approx. dollars
Niagara Region treatment	61.0%	~\$16.71 million
Capital investment	22.1%	~\$6.06 million
Town operations	16.0%	~\$4.38 million
Debt	0.9%	~\$0.25 million

Why this matters: about 39% of the Town-published budget is local operations, capital and debt; 61% is treatment cost attributed to Niagara Region. Local cost control therefore requires both Town efficiency and strong Regional scrutiny.

4. What changed from 2025 to 2026?

Both fixed charges and metered rates increased. The wastewater usage rate had the largest percentage increase among the four basic residential rate components.

Charge	2025	2026	Change
Water fixed / month	\$28.51	\$29.56	3.7%
Wastewater fixed / month	\$46.65	\$48.49	3.9%
Water usage / m3	\$1.870	\$1.960	4.8%
Wastewater usage / m3	\$3.042	\$3.250	6.8%
16 m3 monthly example	\$153.75	\$161.41	5.0%

Increase from 2025 to 2026

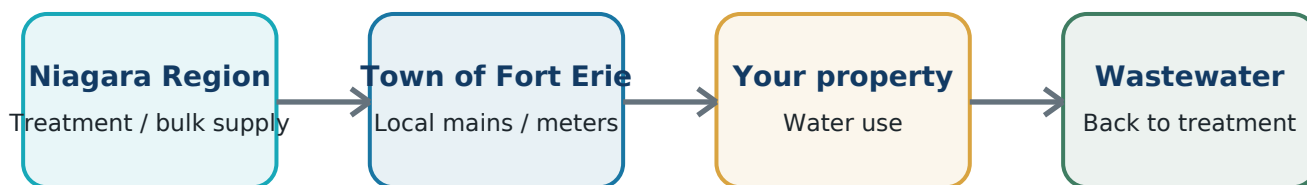


The typical-bill effect

At 16 m3 per month, the Town's example rises from \$153.75 in 2025 to \$161.41 in 2026 - up \$7.66 per month, about \$92 per year, or 4.98%.

5. Treatment vs. local delivery: who controls what?

Who does what?



Niagara Region operates major treatment systems. The Town buys treated water and bills residents, while also funding local distribution, meters, repairs, billing and local infrastructure.

Niagara Region describes itself as the wholesale provider. Fort Erie purchases treated water and then bills residents, while also funding local distribution, meters, maintenance, billing and infrastructure.

For 2026, Niagara Region set a treated-water rate of \$0.783 per m³ for the 75% variable portion of its net water budget. The remaining 25% is allocated among lower-tier municipalities using historical flow shares.

2026 Regional water item	Fort Erie / rate
Fort Erie fixed water requisition (25% portion)	\$1,190,582/year
Monthly fixed water requisition	\$99,215/month
Regional treated-water variable rate	\$0.783 per m ³

Important: the \$0.783/m³ Regional wholesale rate is not directly comparable to the Town's \$1.960/m³ residential water charge. The Town rate also supports local delivery and fixed system costs. The difference should not be read as profit.

6. Regional wastewater costs and local accountability

Niagara Region also charges lower-tier municipalities for wastewater treatment. For Fort Erie, the 2026 wastewater requisition includes a reconciliation adjustment based on earlier actual flows.

2026 Regional wastewater item	Fort Erie amount
2026 wastewater net budget allocation	\$11,962,207
2024 reconciliation applied in 2026	-\$1,018,238
2026 requisition after reconciliation	\$10,943,969
Monthly requisition	\$911,997/month

What Fort Erie Council should report every year

Regional: treatment-rate changes, requisitions and reconciliations. Town: local operating cost, capital transfers, debt, meter/billing performance and expected volume. Ratepayer: the exact impact on a low-use, typical-use and higher-use household.

A public bill should make it easy to see which costs are controlled locally and which are driven by the Region. That is the foundation for credible cost control.

7. Matt Paul's Water-Rate Fairness Plan

My standard is: protect the system, publish the costs, challenge avoidable increases and make the rate structure fair.

1. Plain-language annual bill breakdown.

Show Regional treatment, Town operations, capital, debt and fixed-versus-usage impacts in one public page.

2. Scrutinize Regional treatment increases.

Press for variance explanations, benchmarking and measurable efficiency targets before major increases are accepted.

3. Review the fixed-charge burden.

Examine fairness for seniors and low-use households while protecting the revenue needed for safe infrastructure.

4. Make growth pay its fair share.

Use development charges and growth-related funding where legally available so existing residents are not unfairly burdened by expansion.

5. Prevent bill shocks.

Improve leak alerts, meter-reading accuracy and notices when estimates or unusual consumption could create a catch-up bill.

6. Strengthen targeted relief.

Fort Erie offers a \$125 water/sewer credit for qualifying low-income seniors. Improve awareness and review whether relief keeps pace with fixed-charge pressure.

The Council test

Every proposed rate increase should answer: What changed? Who controls the cost? What measurable action is being taken to keep the next increase down?

Sources, Notes & Campaign Contact

Official sources used for this paper:

Budget-total note: the Town's 2026 rate-change info sheet states \$27.4 million, while the Jan. 29, 2026 budget release states \$27.19256 million. This paper uses the Town's published 61% / 22.1% / 16% / 0.9% allocation shares and labels the related dollar amounts approximate.

1. Town of Fort Erie - 2026 Water and Wastewater Rates / By-law 103-2025
<https://www.forterie.ca/living-in-fort-erie/water-wastewater-stormwater/water-and-wastewater-rates/>
2. Town of Fort Erie - 2026 Water and Wastewater Budget and Rate Changes info sheet
<https://www.forterie.ca/media/sesdua13/water-wastewater-budget-and-rate-charges.pdf>
3. Town of Fort Erie - 2026 Budget media release, Jan. 29, 2026
<https://www.forterie.ca/news/posts/fort-erie-town-council-approves-2026-budget/>
4. Niagara Region - Understanding Niagara's Water Rates
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/water/water-rates/default.aspx>
5. Niagara Region - By-law 2025-69, 2026 Water Budget
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/bylaws/pdf/by-law-2025-69.pdf>
6. Niagara Region - By-law 2025-68, 2026 Wastewater Budget
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/bylaws/pdf/by-law-2025-68.pdf>
7. Town of Fort Erie - Seniors Water/Sewer Relief Program (\$125 credit)
<https://www.forterie.ca/en/living-in-fort-erie/resources/documents/SURF-application-web.pdf>

MATT PAUL
Ward 4 - Ridgeway

905-471-2828
councillor@mattpaulward4.ca
mattpaulward4.ca



Campaign position paper. Rates and program details can change; residents should confirm current amounts with the Town of Fort Erie.