

Re: Form letter undated Received from Mr. S.S. Shearer, Chairman,
And Mr. H.E. Gregory, Administrative Director, of the
Elder Persons Information Centre, on October 9, 1974
Requesting Rebate of Water Rates to Senior Citizens

An undated form letter received in the Municipal Clerk's Office on October 9, 1974 from Mr. S.S. Shearer, Chairman, and Mr. H.E. Gregory, Administrative Director, of the Elder Persons Information Centre, requesting a rebate of water rates to senior citizens was received at the Municipal Council meeting held on October 21, 1974. The Council at that time was advised that a report would be forthcoming on this subject on October 28, 1974.

The following is a report of the Municipal Treasurer dated October 23, 1974 in this connection.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT no abatements of either water or sewer rates be made to any class of citizens of age 65 or over being the owner/occupier of residential property; and THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Elder Persons Information Centre.

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23 October 1974

TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER

File: W5-4

FROM: MUNICIPAL TREASURER

RE: REBATE OF WATER RATES TO SENIOR CITIZENS

On 21 October 1974 Council received the following letter from the Elder Persons Information Centre:

"As an information centre for senior citizens, we have recently received a number of telephone calls in regard to the rebate of municipal water bills for senior citizens.

We believe such a rebate, if approved by your Council, would be of considerable assistance to senior citizens who are finding it difficult to remain within their own homes on account of the high cost of living and ever increasing municipal taxation.

Please advise if it is the intention of your Council to pass such a by-law, covering a rebate of water bills for senior citizens."

Section 202 of the Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act 1960 makes provision as follows:

- (1) The Council may, by by-law, waive any part of any tax, rate, or charge imposed for the purpose of providing sewers, or pollution control and abatement facilities, with respect to their application to property owned and occupied by any class of citizens of sixty-five years of age or over specified in the by-law.
- (2) Any deficiency resulting from a waiver of taxes, rates, or charges pursuant to subsection (1) shall be made up from the general revenues of the municipality.

Section 1 of Bill 152 of the Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act 1974 added water to the list of charges subject to abatement.

It will be noted that a rebate may be given to any class of citizens of sixty-five years of age or over as specified in the by-law.

Herein lies a problem - a problem of criteria of eligibility for rebates of water and possibly sewer rates (since the legislation includes both).

The basic Provincial Home-Owner Grant is \$200.00. The School Tax Removal and Resources Grant is 20% of the amount that the 1974 school tax exceeds the Provincial Home-Owner Grant with the maximum sum payable being \$40.00 and the minimum, \$30.00. In other words, every taxpayer who lives on his property is entitled to a grant not to exceed \$240.00.

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Additionally, a qualifying home owner of 65 years of age or older receives an additional grant of \$50.00.

Renters also qualify for grants. Everyone who is qualified may receive \$30.00. If he or she is age 65 or over the grant is \$80.00.

In Burnaby, in 1974 to date, 3,641 taxpayers age 65 or older made application for Provincial Home-Owner and School Tax Removal and Resources Grants.

These elder citizens are from a wide range of financial circumstances. Some are employed. Others are not.

3,641 home owners represent \$152,922 in water rates and approximately \$117,422.25 in sewer taxes.

Obviously, the Provincial Home-Owner Grant regulations are unsuitable for application to water and sewer rates.

A single person age 65 or over in receipt of Mincome receives \$228.96 per month. A couple receives \$457.92.

The person in greatest need may be the single person who maintains his or her own home.

If Mincome is established as a criterion for rebating water and possibly sewer charges as well, an assessment of cost may be obtained by securing from the Old Age Pension Board a printout of all those registered for Mincome. This would then be compared with the Corporation's tax records to determine who on the list are home owners.

Rebates of water or water and sewer charges will do nothing to assist elderly persons living in rented premises and these people may be worse off than those owning their own homes.

Quite frankly, I believe the Corporation should not become involved. The administration of welfare will soon be taken over by the Province and the Municipality will no longer be involved. The Crown, Federal and Provincial, are in much better positions than the municipalities to redistribute the wealth of the nation.

Railroads and airlines provide special travel rates for the elderly and a number of private organizations provide special rates also. However, while these represent savings for the elderly, they also generate business that would otherwise not be available.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT no abatements of either water or sewer rates be made to any class of citizens of age sixty-five or over being the owner-occupier of residential property.


 MUNICIPAL TREASURER

BM:gw