

Executive Summary

A stormwater utility credit program incentivizes property owners to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality by offering credits on their stormwater utility fees. These credits are often based on the amount of runoff reduction achieved through on-site stormwater management practices like rain barrels, cisterns, or other green infrastructure.

Canadian Municipalities with/planning to have a Stormwater Utility Incentive Program:

Municipality	Storm UT Creation Date	Property Type	Incentive Type
Edmonton (Epcor)	2003	Non-res and Multi-family All Types	Credit amount depends on stormwater reduction amounts 3yr Pilot – RainWise Rebate Program
Waterloo	2016	All types	Credit up to 45%
Kitchener	2011	Residential	Credit up to 45%
Windsor	2025	Non-res and Multi-family >= 3 units Single Family & Duplexes	Credit up to 50% Tree Subsidy and Barrel Rebate
Hamilton	Upcoming – April 2026	Non-res, Agriculture, Multi-family >6 units Farms, parks & similar properties w/o a direct storm connection Single-family res and Multi-family <=6 units	Credit up to 50% 'Green Space Credit' – applied automatically 'Rain Ready Rebate Program'
Guelph	2017	ICI and Multi-family >=6 units	Credit up to 50%
Newmarket	2017	Commercial and Industrial	Charged at the lower rate for area using a stormwater control
Victoria	2016	Low Density Residential Multi-family, Commercial, and Institutional	Up to \$1,500 rebate for a rainwater mgt feature, plus 10% credit off the utility bill. Credit up to 50%
Saskatoon	2002	Non-res and Multi-family	Credit up to 50%
Mississauga	2016	Non-res and Multi-family >= 2 units	Credit up to 50%

Here's a more detailed look at credit programs in Canadian municipalities:

Program Purpose:

- To reduce the overall burden on municipal stormwater systems.
- To improve water quality by reducing the amount of pollutants that flow into storm drains.
- To promote sustainable stormwater management practices.

How it works:

- Property owners who implement eligible stormwater management practices on their property can apply for a credit on their stormwater utility bill.
- The amount of the credit is determined by the level of runoff reduction achieved.
- For example, a property owner might earn a credit based on the amount of rainwater captured and diverted by a rain barrel.
- Some programs also offer credits for reducing peak flow, improving water quality, or for specific practices like sweeping paved areas.

Examples of eligible practices:

- Rain barrels and cisterns
- Porous pavements
- Rain gardens
- Green roofs
- Stormwater swales
- Underground storage systems

Application process:

- The application process typically involves submitting an application form and supporting documentation, such as an engineering report or maintenance plan.
- Some municipalities have online application systems.
- Applications are usually reviewed and approved by the municipality.

Benefits for property owners:

- Reduced stormwater utility fees.
- Improved water quality on property.
- Enhanced landscaping and aesthetics.
- Potential for reduced flood damage and increased property value.

Benefits for the municipality:

- Reduced strain on stormwater infrastructure.
- Improved water quality in local rivers and lakes.
- Increased community awareness and participation in stormwater management.

Pros & Cons of Implementing a Stormwater Utility Credit Program:

Pros	Cons
Encourages environmentally responsible behavior	Low participation rates in residential sectors
Reduces strain on municipal infrastructure	High administrative and implementation costs
Improves local water quality	Requires technical documentation and verification
Enhances property aesthetics and value	Complex billing and tracking
Offers financial relief to proactive property owners	Frequent renewals and inspections
Promotes community engagement	Limited eligibility for some property types
Supports climate resilience	

Specific examples of programs:

City of Edmonton (Epcor) – Stormwater Intensity Adjustment Program – for non-residential and multi-family. Includes an application processing fee and must include an engineering report and if approved, must be updated and resubmitted every 5 years. Also has a rebate program for all types of properties called ‘RainWise Rebate Program’.

City of Waterloo offers up to 45% off the stormwater fee for implementing approved management practices. All property types can apply. They outline the types of measures and lists the % credit that will be received based on the amount of potential volume of rainwater that can be captured by these measures ie. rain barrels.

City of Kitchener offers a credit for various practices, including rainwater harvesting, paved area sweeping, and salt management.

City of Windsor – implemented a stormwater fee in Jan 2025. They have a [stormwater fee calculator](#) using Experience ArcGIS. They use hard surface and call this the ‘Fair Share Plan’.

- **Credit program** for non-res and multi-family ≥ 3 units. Up to 50% of the fee. A Professional Engineer must verify that all practices meet performance criteria and are functioning as designed.
- **Residential Stormwater Finance Tree Subsidy** - Single family and duplex dwellings have the opportunity to obtain one free tree for planting on their private property (non-right-of-way locations). The Tree Planting Program offers up to 200 trees per calendar year to residents within the City of Windsor. Tree warranties are not offered under this program.
- **Residential Stormwater Finance Barrel Rebate** – Single family and duplex dwellings are eligible to receive a rebate for installing a rain barrel of their choosing with a minimum capacity of 132 L (35 gallons) on their private property. Proof of purchase and a photo of the installed barrel is required to qualify and can be submitted with the rebate application. The maximum lifetime eligible amount is \$120 per property and is available for up to 500 properties per year.

City of Hamilton – implementing their stormwater fee starting in April 2026.

- They will be including a stormwater incentives program – credit up to 50% for industrial, commercial and institutional (ICI), agriculture and multi-res >6 units.
- This also includes a ‘Green Space Credit’ for farms, parks and similar properties without a direct connection to the City’s stormwater system. This credit will be automatically applied to the stormwater fee, and the amount of the credit will be based on the ratio of hard (or impervious) surfaces to green space (permeable).
- They will also provide a ‘Rain Ready Rebate Program’ for single-family res and multi-res ≤ 6 units where they can receive rebates for installation of landscape features that address stormwater.

City of Guelph – implemented their stormwater fee Jan 2017 and has a [stormwater credit program for ICI and multi-res of \$\geq 6\$ units](#) of up to 50% off the fee. They have a good ‘Stormwater Fees or Charges Credit Application Guidance Manual’. The key objective of the Stormwater Credit Program is to recognize and reward property owners who have implemented stormwater and/or pollution prevention best management practices (BMPs) and Low Impact Development (LID) to reduce impacts to the City’s stormwater infrastructure by controlling runoff quantity and quality discharged from their property.

- Eligibility of a BMP/LID facility is contingent on the Applicant providing documentation on the design details, function and proof of regulatory/permitting compliance as necessary for the initial credit application. Supporting documentation must be prepared by a Professional Engineer registered in the Province of Ontario and qualified in municipal engineering and stormwater management. The report, including relevant supporting information and regulatory agency permits, shall meet the City of Guelph’s development requirements and generally accepted professional practices. Initial application screening within 5 business days and the technical review within 30 days. If additional info is required, the 30 days is reset.
- Ongoing credit renewals require self-certification reports of proof of ongoing maintenance and possibly City inspection.

City of Newmarket – Offers a credit program for commercial and industrial for those that use Stormwater Management (SWM) controls such as permeable paving, soak-ways pits, infiltration trenches, rain gardens and rainwater harvesting. They have a table identifying the evaluation criteria and credit applied. The property owner must demonstrate that all or portions of their property drains to an eligible ‘BMP’ that meets the specific evaluation criteria identified in their table. Credit renewals occur on a 5-year cycle (BMPs are subject to inspection for good state of repair). There is no credit for residential, however they offer a subsidized backyard tree planting program for residents as a thank you for being environmentally conscious.

- Newmarket’s Stormwater Charge and Credit Research Project (done in 2017) –
 - There are now 22 municipalities with stormwater programs in Canada and 14 in Ontario with more on the way. With the variety of existing programs, most municipalities opt for the tiered flat fee structure and the majority do not offer a landowner credit program, particularly when it comes to the residential sector. Those that do offer a credit program have been plagued with low participation rates. The reason: the messaging and motivations behind these programs do not encourage participation.

Figure 1: Canadian Municipal Credit Offering



City of Victoria – Stormwater Utility has a ‘Rainwater Rewards Program’ (rebates and credits).

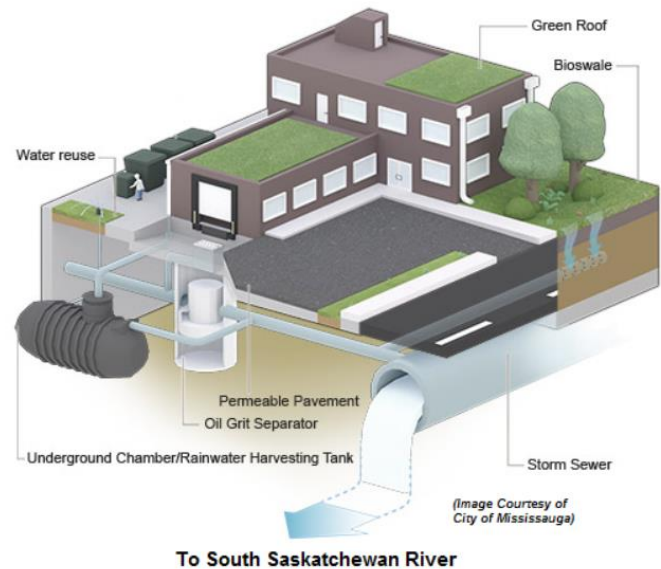
- Low Density Residential:
 - Rebates available for upfront installation costs of a rainwater mgt feature up to \$1,500. Plus receive a 10% credit off the utility bill.
- Multi-family, Commercial, and Institutional:
 - If a rainwater mgt feature is used on your property you can apply for a credit of 2.5% to 50% off the annual utility bill. Credits are applied based on the feature used and the minimum roof area directed to the feature. Also includes credits for education.
 - Credit application has to be renewed

- They have a Rainwater Management Standards – Professional Edition Manual. It describes the types of rainwater mgt features, for more complex properties and properties with site constraints which must have a qualified professional doing the design/install.
- Rebates are not available for these property types.

City of Saskatoon offers credits for multi-res and non-non-res properties who implement stormwater and/or pollution best management practices (BMP's). Credit categories – Water Quality Improvements, Peak Flow Reduction, and Onsite Retention/Runoff Volume Reduction.

City of Mississauga offers up to 50% credit for multi-res (>=2 units) and non-res for properties that install, operate, and maintain eligible facilities. Stormwater Utility started in 2016. Council originally approved a two-year home visit service, but after a year they decided to approve only an online Stormwater Outreach

and Education Program and did not approve staff increase for providing a home visit service. Single family residents who are low-income seniors and persons with disabilities may be eligible for a subsidy to help pay their stormwater charge. If they qualify for tax assistance, then they automatically qualify for a stormwater charge subsidy.



- Resilient Consulting conducted a review of the existing credit program after 5 years to benchmark with other Cities and provide recommendations for improvements. Also included in the study were options to introduce single family residential incentives, or not.
- **Multi-res and non-res:**
 - They discovered that half the Cities use performance-based criteria which require descriptive solutions that can demonstrate performance through monitoring and modeling and the other half use Presumptive-based criteria applying prescriptive solutions that are assumed to achieve the desired performance targets. The benchmark Cities align with Mississauga's categories:
 - Peak Flow Reduction
 - Runoff Volume Reduction
 - Water Quality Treatment
 - Operations and Activities
 - The study concluded that simplified credits based on presumptive criteria should not be added, that the existing credit program should not be increased in complexity, and that stormwater grants and credit trading offsetting should not be implemented. In addition, it was concluded that the City's max credit (combined for all four categories) of 50% is appropriate as 9 of the 14 benchmark municipal stormwater credit programs have set their max credit between 45-55%,

- **Single Family Residential Options from the Study:**
 - **Do nothing** – cost of implementation is high and anticipated uptake is low,
 - **Subsidy Program** – collaborate with local conservation authorities to offer discounted materials or subsidize the cost of rain barrels or trees,
 - **Rebate Program** – Offer a rebate on a first-come first-served basis, available for appropriately sized SWM facilities. A sliding scale approach can be taken by offering a rebate for the minimum requirement which increases with enhancements to the SWM facilities up to a max rebate. This style of program may be desirable as the City maintains control of the financial incentive available and admin activities are low (*reference City of Guelph*),
 - **Credit Program** – offer a simplified program applying presumptive-based criteria presumptively to approve credits for SWM facilities that treat a specific capture area or provide adequate volume and/or footprint area. This program requires additional effort to manage the billing database and to track accounting info. The admin costs of this style of program will also be higher than a rebate program (*reference City of Kitchener*).
 - **Hybrid Program** –adapt the most efficient features of the previously listed options to provide the most flexible and attractive program to the customer. It is expected that this program would have the highest admin costs (*reference City of Victoria*).
 - Should the City choose to implement a residential incentive program, it is recommended that they develop and include an extensive list of incentivized stormwater management (SWM) facilities and techniques with supporting educational material and guidance on sizing, construction, and maintenance with the amended bylaw. An extensive list of recommended SWM facilities is provided within Resilient Consulting’s report including rain barrels/cisterns, rain gardens, permeable pavement, and green roofs.
 - **Mississauga did not opt-in to providing any single-family residential subsidies/credits etc.**