



Universal Water Metering Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are water meters?

A. Water meters measure the amount of water entering each property. They allow the Sunshine Coast Regional District to identify leaks. Water meters also help all of us better understand and learn about our water use. This helps the SCRD manage drinking water more efficiently in a way that lowers costs and environmental impact.

Q. What are the benefits of water metering?

A. Metering will play a key role in ensuring safe and reliable water for the community in the long term as the needs for conserving water, maintaining current water systems, and accessing additional supply increases.

The SCRD will be utilizing meters because they will:

- Allow the SCRD to measure water use and better plan for the future
- Promote responsible water use to all members of the community
- Improve the ability of the SCRD and property owners to detect leaks
- Demonstrate responsible management practices that strengthens the SCRD's ability to receive senior government grant funding
- Allow for the installation of backflow prevention devices that improve the safety and quality of our drinking water

Q. How will my water bill change?

A. Water bills will remain the same for the time being. Once meters are installed, the SCRD's priority is to identify leaks. Water meters will have to be installed on all properties using SCRD water before a public consultation process begins on rate structures. The consultation will likely occur in 2019 or 2020. The new rate structure will replace the existing rate structure.

Q. Was the public consulted and involved in the process?

A. Adopted in 2013, the Comprehensive Regional Water Plan ([Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)) specifies a plan for increasing water supply in combination with metering, to manage demand. A public consultation process was held in 2013 leading up to the adoption of the Comprehensive Regional Water Plan. All residents were provided the opportunity to complete a survey or attend open houses to express thoughts and concerns regarding the plan, including water metering as a method of demand management. The majority of respondents were in favour of water metering.

Q. How much water conservation is realized as a result of installing water meters?

A. It is common for communities to realize a reduction in water consumption of 20% to 30% after the installation of water meters. The reduction is attributed to the detection and repair of leaks in the water system as well as customers' change in water consumption behaviour.

The SCRD has a goal of reducing per capita water consumption by 33% by the year 2020 from 2010 levels. As of 2017, the Sunshine Coast has reduced consumption 4%. Water metering will help us achieve our target.

Q. Shouldn't water be free?

A. The treatment and distribution of safe, clean, potable water involves various costs, such as:

- Infrastructure construction
- Infrastructure maintenance, repairs and replacements (pipes, pumps, reservoirs, etc);
- Operational costs (eg. Staffing and energy)
- Treatment costs

Q. Isn't metering just a tax grab?

No. All revenue collected for water stays within the water service and cannot be used for any other purposes. Metering is about providing information about how much water is being used. Once initial leaks have been fixed and a baseline consumption for the community has been established, a public consultation will be held to determine a rate structure.

Q. How much will this project cost?

A. The SCRD has budgeted \$5,960,000 for meter installations in the Sechelt area.

Q. Shouldn't we be spending money on increasing supply instead?

A. The SCRD's Comprehensive Regional Water Plan outlines steps for increasing water supply in combination with metering to decrease demand. The SCRD is pursuing the Chapman Lake Supply Expansion project and proceeding with the groundwater exploration and raw water reservoir to capture more precipitation during the winter months.

Q. Is the SCRD privatizing our water?

A. No. Meters will be supplied and installed by a contractor. The SCRD will own the water meters once installed. Our water system will continue to be owned and operated by the SCRD.

Q. Are new developments and population growth the reason we need water meters?

A. No. Water meters are widely recognized as a best practice. They are being installed to responsibly manage our water resources and reliably provide water to all SCRD water users for the long-term.

Q. Where and when will my meter be installed?

Your meter will be installed by a contractor at the service connection, usually located at or near the property line. Installations for the Sechelt area are anticipated to occur in 2018/2019.

Q. There are multiple dwellings on my property, can I have multiple meters?

A. The SCRD is installing a water meter at every service connection. In most cases, properties have one service connection and will have one meter. Once a new rate structure is developed, property owners will decide how to divide the water bill amongst the different dwellings on a property.

Q. What kinds of meters are being used? Are the meters radio frequency?

A. The meters that will be installed are radio frequency meters. The transmitter uses radio frequency communication technology certified by Industry Canada. This is similar to what is used in other small household appliances, such as cordless phones, garage door openers, internet routers and TV/VCR/DVD remote controls. The transmitter is designed to avoid harmful interference with these devices.

Residents have the option of having a touch-pad meter installed instead. Touch-pad meters will have a meter reading fee that is outlined in Bylaw 422 as \$25 per read up to a maximum of \$300 per year. You may contact the SCRD for more information about opting for a touch-pad meter.

Q. Will anything else be installed with my meter? Will it affect anything on my property?

A. Yes. Backflow preventers will be installed along with your water meter. This is a small device that protects the water system from potential contamination by ensuring that water from the household side of the pipes does not flow back into the distribution system. Backflow preventers also stop the release of pressure from household plumbing into the SCRD distribution system.

Modern plumbing can accommodate pressure fluctuations; however, occasionally older hot water tanks, plumbing, and toilets may leak or fail if not equipped with pressure relief systems.

Homeowners should ensure their pressure reducing valve (PRV) has received proper maintenance and that hot water tanks have a pressure relief valve and ideally a thermal expansion tank as outlined in the plumbing code. If your plumbing is old, a certified plumber can help you determine your needs.

Q. Will our water information be shared with others?

A. Your information will not be shared with others. As a government body, the SCRD is required to meet strict privacy legislation that protects the general public's private information.

Q. Are other water users on the Sunshine Coast getting meters?

A. Yes. The Town of Gibsons was the first region of the Sunshine Coast to implement water metering on its own system. Properties in Pender Harbour had meters installed in 2014/2015. In 2017/2018 water meters were installed in the rural Electoral Areas of Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek, Elphinstone, West Howe Sound (excluding Hopkins Landing), Egmont and Earls Cove. All properties in the Sechelt area should be metered by the end of 2019.