



City set to install 'smart' water meters in homes

Two-Year Pilot Project

Kelly Patrick

National Post

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

Torontonians could eventually pay more to use water at peak times of day, the chair of the city's public works and infrastructure committee says.

Toronto Water is planning to install wireless "smart" water meters at 15,000 homes in and near the downtown as part of a two-year pilot project that could begin as early as the end of this year.

The experiment, which will target homes and businesses in Ward 18 (Davenport) and Ward 28 (Toronto Centre-Rosedale), will not force owners to pay a premium for peak-time use right away.

Instead, Toronto Water will use the pilot period to test the technology. It would be up to city council to decide whether a peak-time pricing scheme should be implemented citywide.

"We should encourage people to use water in off-peak hours, just like electricity," councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker, the chairman of the works committee, said. "We are already intending to do that."

Mr. De Baeremaeker was responding to two reports commissioned by a coalition of contractors and construction unions that were released yesterday, which recommended the city charge more for water when demand is at its highest.

"If you charge higher prices [at peak times], you get people to use water at different times," said Harry Kitchen, a professor of economics at Trent University in Peterborough, and author of one of the reports.

"Smart meters can be implemented, it's not that hard," he added.

Prof. Kitchen also encouraged municipalities across the province to experiment with more private-public partnerships.

Lou Di Gironimo, the general manager of Toronto Water, said the city already contracts out "extensively" for all new capital projects.

As well, the municipal utility is already committed to making users pay the true price of providing water, he said.

City council approved 9% increases in the water rate this year and last. Toronto Water will ask for the same rate hikes every year until at least 2013.

Toronto Water is debt-free and has about \$150-million in reserves, Mr. Di Gironimo added.

kpatrick@nationalpost.com

© National Post 2007

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.