

Hello, Senator Cummings.

I am writing, in my capacity as the Director of Planning & Development for the City of St. Albans, to urge the Senate Finance Committee to adjust Section 8 of bill S. 115, as introduced, so that it does not misconstrue stormwater operating fees with stormwater utility fees and thus have the unintended consequence of eliminating agricultural and silvicultural uses from joining all other properties in paying their fair share of utility fees.

In general, stormwater utility fees pay for water quality responsibilities that an entire community shares; all property owners, including farms.

A municipal stormwater utility fee is not a property tax, and typically it is not a fee associated with any one property's stormwater permit status.

Local stormwater utilities establish fees for the management of stormwater related to drainage networks serving municipal roadways and water quality improvements to reduce pollutants from municipally owned impervious surfaces. The municipal stormwater utility fees that municipalities charge to all property owners is based on the fact that all receive a benefit from municipal stormwater management work and all need to pay in for clean water. Those fees pay for stone lining ditches, replacing and building culverts, building settling ponds, redirecting runoff away from road networks, and other much more complex stormwater management features.

Municipalities are mandated by state legislation to undertake the work to manage stormwater from municipal property and road networks. State grants and loans for stormwater management do not begin to cover the entire cost of such projects.

Many stormwater utilities allow a property to be credited for a portion of their fee if their property includes any beneficial water quality treatment. Agricultural and silvicultural uses that provide verifiable water quality benefit should also be eligible for free credits, but they should not be exempted, across the board, from paying the utility fees that their fellow property owners pay.

We urge you to honor the "all in" approach to municipal stormwater utilities and the community-wide water quality benefits that we are working toward.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide further comment.

Thank you for your time.

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