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November 3, 2008

CRD voters reject private sewage treatment– Environics survey

VICTORIA—Two years into planning for sewage treatment, the overwhelming majority of Capital Regional District (CRD) residents still give a resounding ‘no’ to privately operated sewage treatment, and they will be judging civic candidates on the issue.

An Environics Research Group survey on issues related to new sewage treatment finds that CRD residents overwhelmingly trust the local government more than a private corporation to operate new sewage treatment. Seven in ten (70%) say that they trust the regional district more, compared to just 16 per cent who would trust a private corporation more.

When asked if it would make a difference to them whether a candidate in the current municipal elections declares that they favour private operation of sewage treatment, half (53%) say they would be less likely to vote for such a candidate. And close to six in ten (58%) would be less likely to support a candidate who opposes new sewage treatment because it is too expensive.

The survey, commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, is the second survey of the region’s residents on issues related to new sewage treatment.

CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill says that the results send an important message to municipal candidates looking to get elected on November 15. “Despite significant pressure – from the province and from some in the CRD – to privatize sewage treatment, the public remains staunchly opposed. The people who live here want sewage treatment, and they want it to be public,” says O’Neill.

Kim Manton, CRD resident and ‘Keep It Public’ campaigner with CUPE, says that even the high cost estimate for sewage treatment has not deterred the public. “Clearly this issue is near and dear to our hearts, and people are saying we simply can’t afford not to do it,” says Manton. When asked whether, in light of the price tag, new sewage treatment should be postponed, more than six in ten (63%) of CRD residents take the view that it is needed and that we cannot afford not to do it. Only one-quarter (27%) take the view that \$1.2 billion is too much money and that new sewage treatment needs to be postponed.

Manton is also pleased that public support remains very high for resource recovery technologies that reuse wastewater for things like heating and irrigation. She notes that seven in ten residents (69%) think it should be a high priority for the regional district.

Poll results are available at [keepwaterpublic.ca](http://www.cupe.bc.ca/452) (<http://www.cupe.bc.ca/452>)

This telephone survey of 500 CRD residents was conducted between October 6 and 11, 2008. The results can be considered accurate with within plus or minus 4.4 per cent, nineteen times out of twenty

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Contact: Kim Manton, Keep It Public campaign, 250.888.0270;
Roseanne Moran, CUPE Communications 778.835.7537

