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Greater Victoria sewage treatment should be public – Environics survey

VICTORIA - The overwhelming majority of Capital Regional District (CRD) residents want new sewage treatment to be publicly operated by the CRD, not by private corporations, a new survey has found. Residents also want environmentally advanced technology to reuse and recycle waste.

An Environics Research Group survey, commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, finds that residents of the Capital Regional District overwhelmingly trust the CRD more than a private corporation to operate a new sewage treatment facility. Three out of four CRD residents (76%) trust the regional district a lot (50%) or a little (26%) more, compared to just 16 per cent who would trust a private corporation a lot (7%) or a little (9%) more.

“Surveys like this reinforce what CUPE members hear every day – people want high quality public services from their governments. Sewage treatment is one of those services – and it is very important to basic public health and our environment,” says CUPE BC president Barry O’Neill.

Getting on with the job is a key priority. Six in ten (61%) CRD residents think that building a new sewage treatment facility to serve the Capital Region should be a high priority. Another 28 per cent think it should be a medium priority.

Six in ten (62%) think it should be a high priority for the regional district to bring in resource recovery to reuse and recycle wastewater in the CRD.

In July 2006, the B.C. government directed the CRD to bring in proper sewage treatment – with a very short timeline of June 2007. Following this, Premier Campbell announced that provincial funding for the project would be linked to a public-private partnership (P3) model.

CRD residents feel it is unfair that the Campbell government has linked provincial government funding for CRD sewage treatment to consideration of privatized operation. Seven in ten (71%) consider this to be unfair to the residents and taxpayers of the CRD compared to just 24 per cent who think it is fair.

Poll results are summarized in the background report at www.keepwaterpublic.ca.

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